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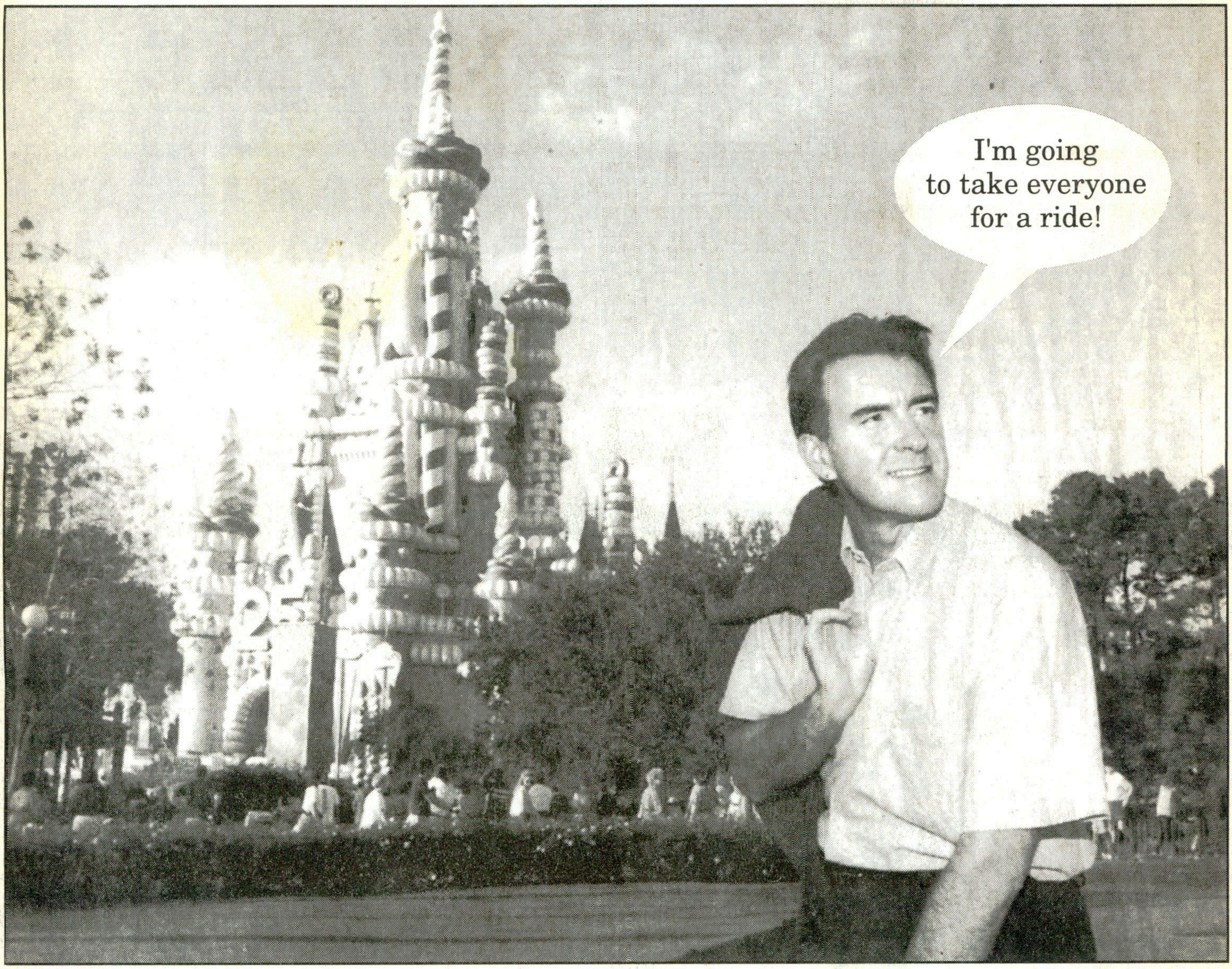

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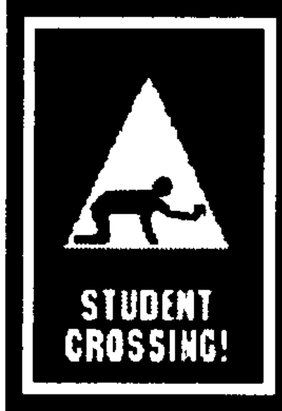

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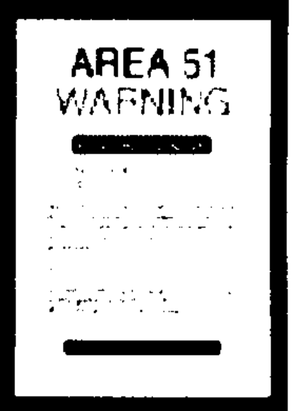

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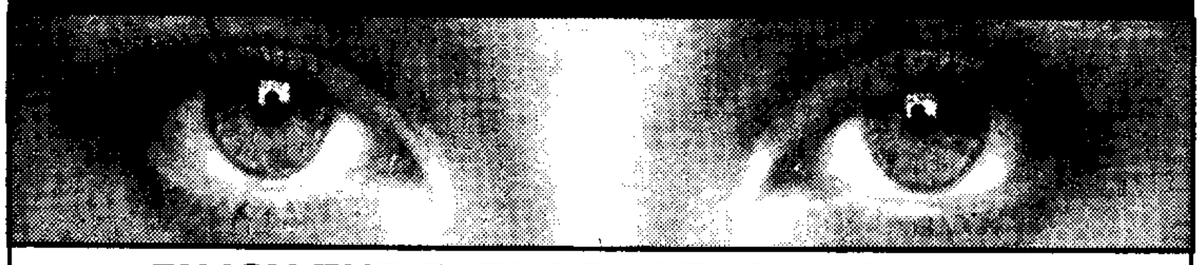

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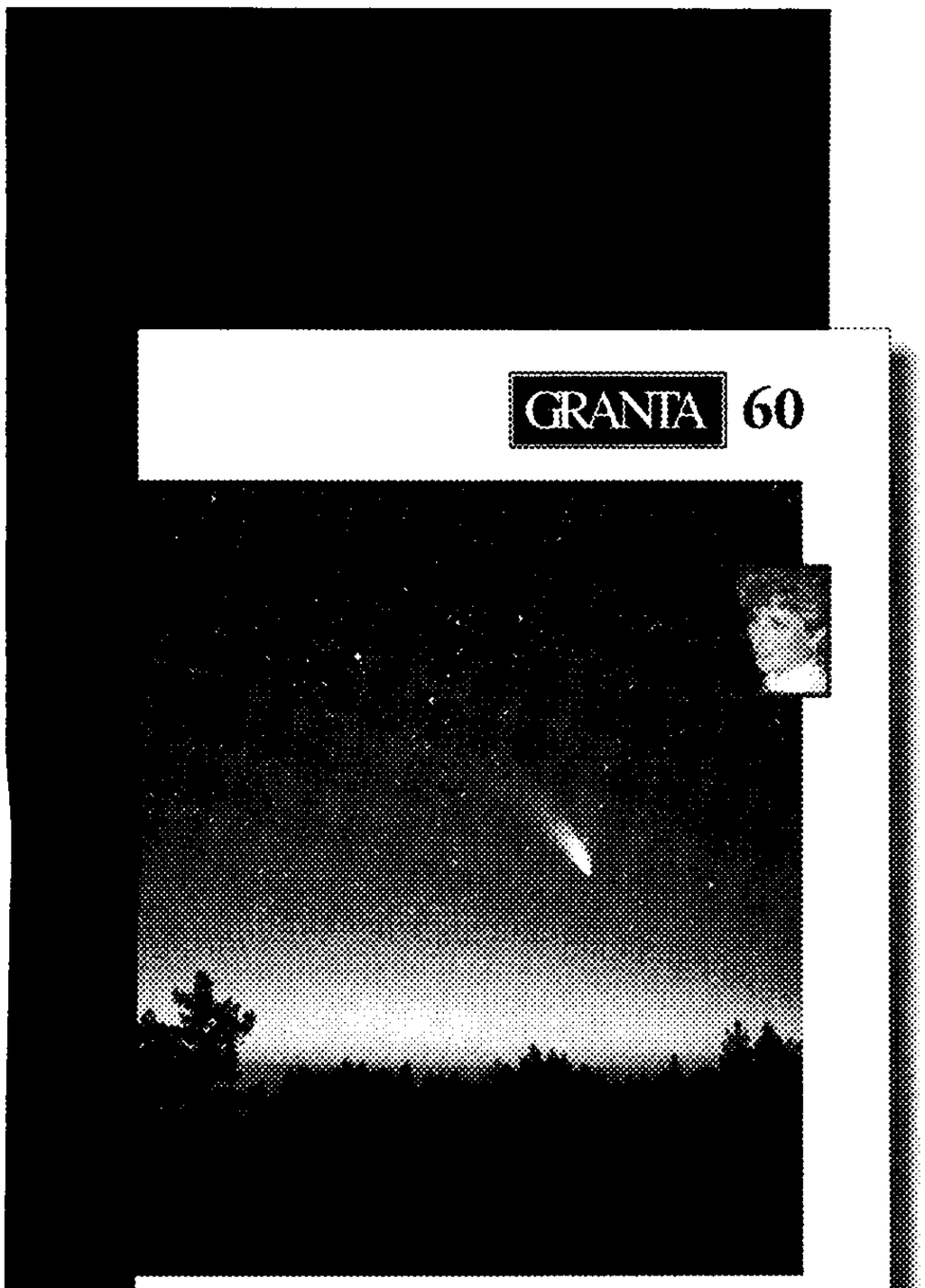

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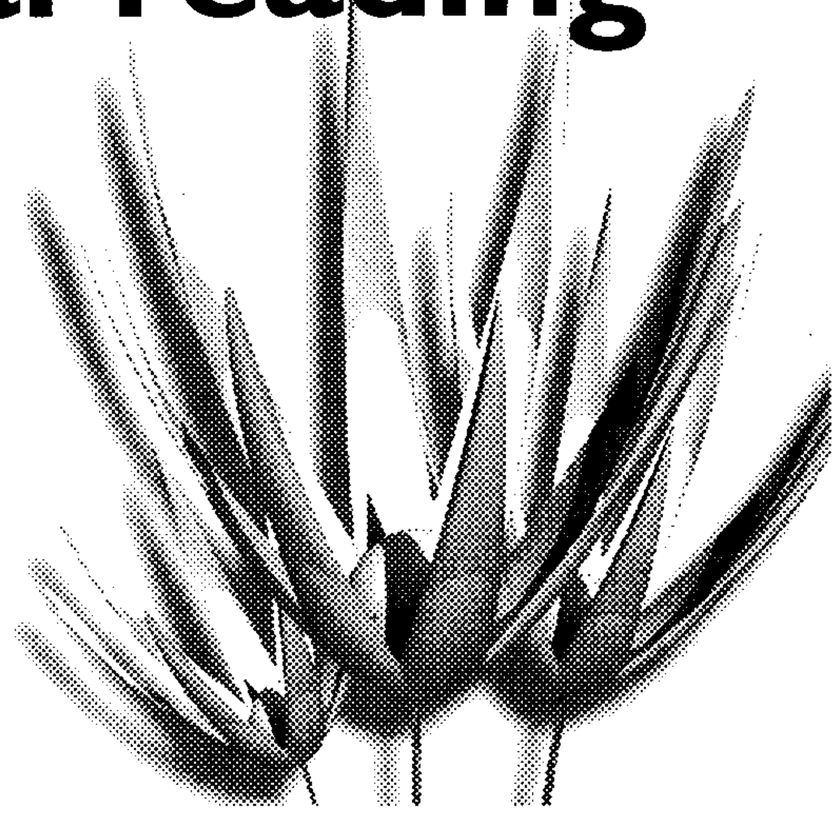

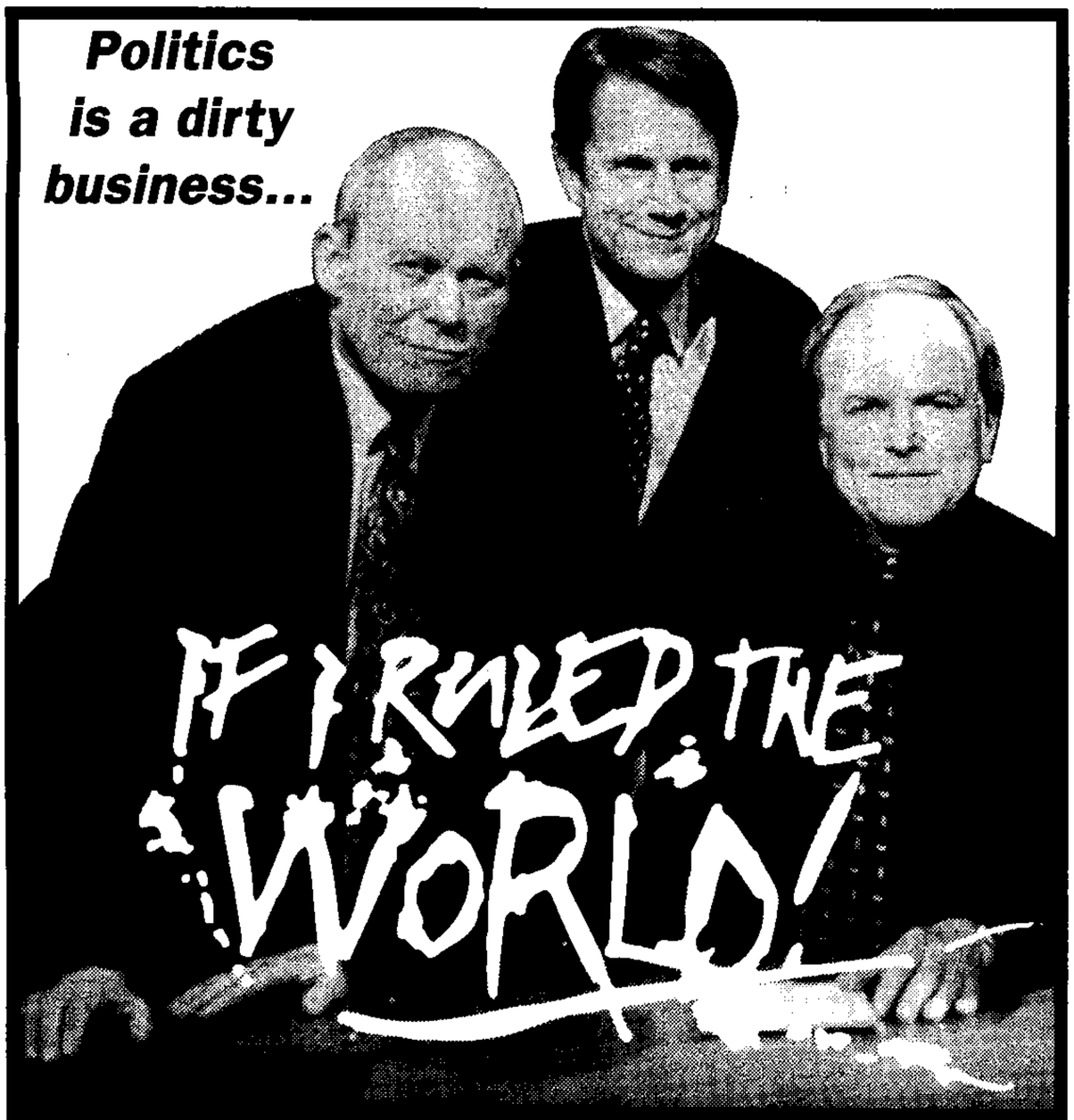

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Gnome

I HAVE now decided in the interests of justice to hand over to the police the tape-recording of Daily Gnome Reporter Dawn Allfraud's conversation with the son of the Home Secretary. It will entirely vindicate the Daily Gnome's reputation for honest and impartial investigative journalism of the highest kind. I reprint here a transcript of the recording which is now in the hands of Inspector Knacker of the Drug Squad.

Dawn: Would you like a nice time, big boy? I'm a real goer with a bit of pot inside me.

Schoolboy: er... er... crikey...

Dawn: Go and buy some from that bloke over there, handsome. Here's the money.

Schoolboy: Gulp... blimey.

Dawn: I'm mad for it me. Hurry up, lover boy.

Unfortunately, the tape then becomes indecipherable due to mechanical difficulties, but the extract clearly demonstrates that my reporters were involved in a bona fide act of in-depth reportage of enormous concern to every single person living in Britain today.

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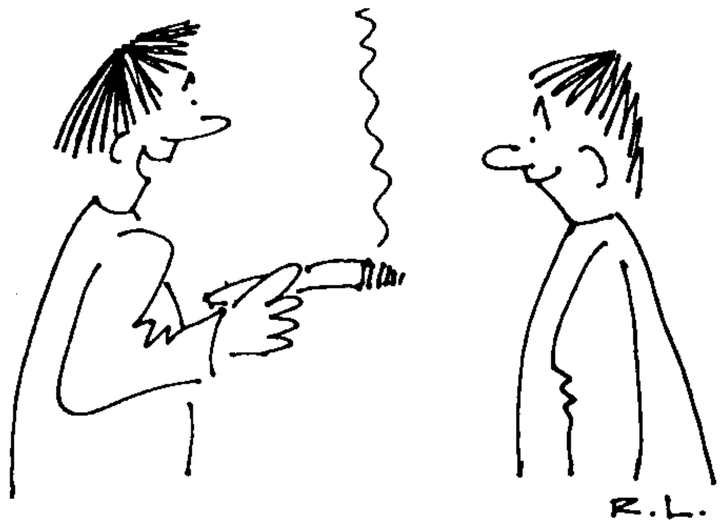

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COLOUR SECTION

ROLL OF HONOUR

TONY BLAIR's new year's honours list was heralded as a "break with the past" which would hand out gongs to "people at the coal face" rather than to fatcat businessmen.

Two good examples were the knighthood for John Carter, £483,869 chief executive of Commercial Union, and the CBE for Allan Bridgewater, chief executive of Norwich Union. Both companies were "named and shamed" by the government last year for failing to compensate the tens of thousands they swindled in the famous "switchin' and ditchin'" pensions scandal ("switch 'em from an occupational scheme into a private pension — then ditch 'em").

Bridgewater took over at Norwich Union in 1989 just as an army of commission-hungry salespeople swarmed over the country swindling occupational pensioners. In 1994, Norwich Union was fined £300,000 and forced to disband its entire sales force of 800. This was hailed by the social security secretary of the day, Peter Lilley, as a triumph for the regulators.

But wait. Who *were* the regulators? The Securities and Investment Board (SIB). And who sat on its advisory committee as chairman of the Association of British Insurers? Allan Bridgewater CBE.

"NEW" Labour showed its commitment to the workers in the new year honours' list when it awarded Gerry Holbrook a richly deserved MBE for services to the newspaper industry.

Holbrook retired in 1996 as executive director of United Provincial Newspapers. And his "service" to the industry? Apart from presiding over the catastrophic drop in circulation suffered in the 1980s and 1990s by group titles such as the *Yorkshire Post*, he presided over the derecognition of trade unions on the papers, denying print workers and journalists a voice even where their unions represented the vast majority of employees.

In his spare time Holbrook served on the board of the United Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust, whose main claim to fame was the sacking of Leeds General Infirmary whistleblower Dr Chris Chapman. Clearly worthy of a people's gong.

FUGGIN' BUGGIN'

IF HARRODS spokesman Michael Cole continues to deny that staff telephones are bugged, perhaps he should listen to one of Mohamed Fayed's secret tapes — of which the *Eye* has obtained a copy — in which someone sounding remarkably like Michael Cole is talking to his secretary, Emma.

Cole also features in a series of worried conversations recorded on the extension of finance director Graham Hawkins about an Inland Revenue probe into fees paid to overseas celebrities for opening Harrods sales. The panic was triggered by a tip-off letter sent to the Revenue's foreign entertainers' unit about a sale opened by Diana Ross.

Cole tries to assure Hawkins that overseas stars who attend Harrods events — Brooke Shields, Tony Curtis, Roger Moore and former *Dynasty* star John Forsyth — were "acquaintances" or "genuine friends" of the Phoney Pharaoh, and what he chose to give them out of his pocket was not a tax issue.

Cole says he has told the Revenue's Mr Waters: "Diana Ross came here. She is a personal friend. Mr Al-Fayed paid for all her expenses. Sent her a ticket. These were not charges on Harrods. Her arrangement was with him and him alone. They have known each other for years." Referring to Mr Waters, he adds: "From now on it is correspondence only with this jerk."

Hawkins still decides to contact accountants Price Waterhouse as a precaution, because the affair may "blow up in our faces". His worst fears are realised in a call to one Peter Clark, who is told to move from an open-plan office to a room with the door shut — ironically so that no one else can hear them speak. Clark confirms that it was not Fayed but Harrods that had settled account cards and paid cash for some stars, plus an airfare for Brooke Shields. "It's a mess, isn't it?" Hawkins murmurs. Clark agrees: "It certainly is."

Cher was due to open the Harrods sale this week but pulled out following the death of her ex-husband Sonny Bono. No doubt, however, her fees and perks would have been duly notified to the Inland Revenue.

LAW OF MOSES

WHO exactly is Mr Justice Moses, the man who on 30 December granted the attorney-general an injunction under the contempt of court act against any newspaper that dared to publish the names of Jack and William Straw?

Could he by any chance be related to Alan Moses QC, the man who in 1992 prosecuted Matrix Churchill in the famous arms-to-Iraq case which resulted in the acquittal of three company executives after government documents showed that they had been given a "nod and wink" to carry out their illegal exports?

That Mr Moses argued strenuously that the crucial documents should be kept secret. If they *had* been kept secret, of course, the three men might well have gone to prison. And for his views on disclosure Mr Moses was sharply criticised by the 1996 Scott report. "Mr Moses formed the view," wrote Sir Richard Scott (G, 18, 41), "that the departmental documents would not materially assist the defendants. I have no doubt that this view was genuinely held but, equally, no doubt that it was wrong."

That Mr Moses, Scott concluded, had been obsessed with what would help the prosecution and not nearly concerned enough about what would help the defence. Ring any bells? Er, 'fraid so: no sooner was the ink dry on the Scott report than Alan Moses, the secrecy-loving QC, became Mr Justice Moses, the secrecy-loving high court judge.

STRAW AND THE MIRROR: FULL STORY – *SEE OVER*

"Am I worse off buying the pill or as a single mother?"

Street of Shame

TINA WEAVER, the *Mirror*'s power-crazed new deputy editor, began her job by despatching a charming memo: "Every reporter must come up with three exclusives over the Christmas period and if not explain why to the deputy editor."

This must have been particularly alarming for comely hackette Dawn Alford, whose work-rate had already been the subject of complaints to news editor Eugene Duffy. Imagine Dawn's delight, then, when she was telephoned by Peter Trowell, a conman and ex-jailbird, who had been a regular "informant" during her previous career at the *News of the Screws*.

When the *Mirror* broke the story of William Straw's alleged drug-dealing, editor Piers "total prat and tosser" Morgan claimed that Alford had acted on an anonymous tip-off from a concerned member of the public. His pious self-righteousness about a £10 drug deal might have looked rather less impressive if it was known that the paper had paid far more than £10 to a convicted criminal for the "scoop".

Almost everything about Morgan's version of events is disingenuous. Why, one might wonder, does he never mention the other "*Mirror* girl" on the story, feature-writer Tanith Carey? The reason is that she was only sent along to add "cred" to the set-up as she looks less well-scrubbed and respectable than the cherubic Ms Alford, and so more likely to be a trainee estate agent out for a good time.

Then there's the little matter of the *Mirror* tapes of young Straw's encounter with the killer bimbos. Their existence wasn't revealed to *Mirror* readers, or Knacker of the Yard, until the *Observer* established that the rendezvous had been bugged. The *Mirror* now says the tapes are of "poor quality", but more cynical hands suggest there may be another quality problem: that the tapes confirm that it was the undercover hackettes who made all the running by plying him with lager, talking incessantly about drugs and then, at closing time, saying how much they'd like a little dope.

That little dope turned out to be an eager-to-please 17-year-old who thought a couple of tasty older birds had taken a shine to him. (It is no coincidence that the *Mirror* sent in two pouting hackettes rather than a Plain Jane or one of their laddish male hacks.) Since Alford had been buying his drinks all evening, obtaining 1.92 grams of cannabis from a friend in the pub seemed a small favour in return.

Public-spirited Piers Morgan claims he rang Jack Straw to warn him that his son was planning to attend a party where stronger stimulants would be available. What he neglected to add was that it was Alford herself who invited William to a party where there would be "lots of vodka" — and that the youngster declined.

Morgan also insists that at first he had no intention of running the story, since he wanted to respect the Straw family's privacy. It was only when Jack Straw hauled his son off to the cop-shop that the *Mirror* felt obliged to reveal all.

The truth is that the Labour-supporting rag was hugely tempted all along but hesitated to knife a Labour minister — until the tipster, Peter Trowell, threatened to take his story to the *News of the Screws*. Another reason for the dither and delay was that some *Mirror* executives feared the operation sailed rather too close to entrapment. When the home secretary took his son to the police, it heightened the risk of the real background to the messy sting eventually surfacing. The *Mirror* thus decided to "go public" and put on a huge display of "world exclusive" bravado over a story which it had apparently never wanted to publish at all!

"In a society where even the home secretary's son is not safe, there can be no weakening in the fight against drugs," a *Mirror* editorial thundered last week. "They are a potential threat to every family." Piers Morgan may be moralistic about such things, but what of his staff? During her chat-up of William Straw, Alford boasted at length of her drug experiences. Maybe she was lying — but some of her colleagues are certainly well acquainted with exotic substances. "If they introduced random testing, the paper would be in huge trouble," said one former executive. "I could name at least six senior people who use recreational drugs."

Indeed. Who can forget those happy days when political editor David Seymour — who is responsible for the paper's sermonising editorials — used to lock himself in predecessor Joe Haines's office every Friday and smoke cannabis until the smoke billowed under the door, and all that could be heard was unrestrained and demented giggling?

Jack Straw has escaped without any serious pressure for his resignation. Perhaps Piers Morgan ought to be the one considering his position.

DAWN ALFORD is certainly an enterprising lass. Former colleagues from the *Southern Evening Echo* (who describe her as "quite talented but stupendously lazy") recall her unusual application for a job on the *News of the World*.

When Piers Morgan was appointed *Screws* editor in 1994 Dawn, despite being a complete stranger, wrote him a gushing letter of congratulation — and enclosed a very fetching photograph of herself. Morgan was so impressed with Dawn's qualifications he gave her a job immediately, and later took her with him when he moved to the *Mirror*.

WILL Jack Straw proceed with his Press Complaints Commission case regarding intrusion into son William's privacy?

The home secretary objected to a story in the *Express* — barely a week before William made a more notable appearance in the gutter *Mirror* — which reported that Jack Straw, chairman of the governors at Pimlico school, had decreed a sartorial brush-up for teachers, banning denims and insisting male staff wear ties.

The student council had apparently given its support to the scruffy teachers — and this body, the paper noted, was headed by one William Straw. Perhaps his dad should have spotted such tell-tale signs of rebellion before the *Mirror* went for him.

MIRROR editor Piers "Boy" Morgan constantly boasted to colleagues what a close friend he was of TV presenter Anthea Turner and her husband Peter Powell. "Round there again for tea this weekend," he used to announce proudly.

He was such good a pal, in fact, it was the *Sun* wot got the story of Turner and Powell's separation.

The day after the announcement, meanwhile, the *Mail on Sunday*'s TV magazine, *Programme*, carried this prescient exchange:

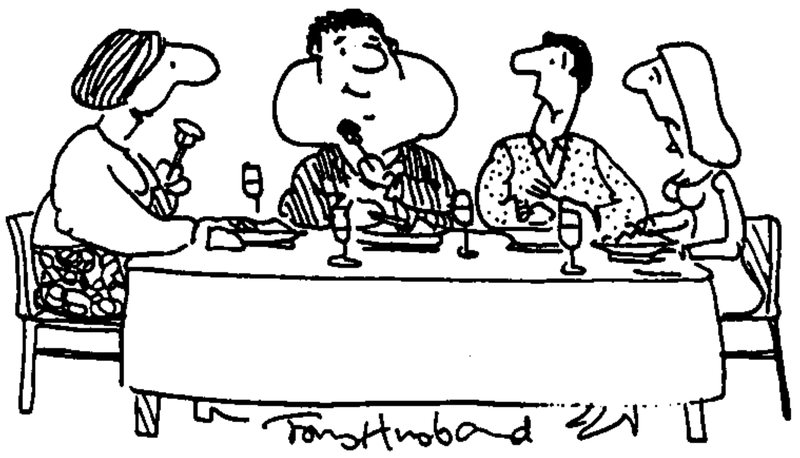
MoS: "It's lucky that you and your husband aren't jealous of the time the other spends at work."

Anthea: "We understand each other's aims... It works really well for us, it really does."

THE *Times* featured a jolly Christmas profile of Desmond Llewellyn, technical expert "Q" in the James Bond films.

"Llewellyn", readers were told, "is a passionate Welshman" who had fought over "just how Welsh Q should be".

A few paragraphs later, those without a James Bond-style decoding machine then read that "like all good Englishmen, Llewellyn has been a *Times* reader for many years". No doubt SPECTRE was to blame for the technical hitch.



"George was brought up by hamsters"

AN UNHOLY but intriguing alliance is developing between Mohamed Fayed and loose-cannon *Mirror* executive Bridget "Death" Rowe.

As we reported in *Eye* 938, rumours of Fayed's interest in buying a stake in the Mirror Group might explain the otherwise inexplicable amount of space and credibility which several MGN papers have given to conspiracy theories suggesting that Diana and Dodi were assassinated. (One consequence of these theories, gratifyingly for Fayed, is to deflect attention from Dodi's rash decision to order drugged-up, boozed-up chauffeur Henri Paul to drive through Paris at lunatic speed.)

According to sources at Canary Wharf, Fayed has been persuaded that Bridget is a media genius who would be perfect to run his media empire — if and when he finally gets one. One scheme was for Fayed to buy the ailing *People* for around £40m, but David "Rommel" Montgomery was unwilling to sell. It is also rumoured that Bridget encouraged Fayed to bid for all or part of the IPC magazine empire.

Getting into bed with la Rowe — if only in the business sense — would say a lot about Fayed's ethical elasticity, since his new pal Bridget is renowned as the Street of Shame's most enthusiastic user of paparazzi photos and the woman who spent £300,000 of Mirror shareholders' dosh on those grainy pap-snaps of Di and Dodi kissing.

Rowe effectively lost control of the *People* recently when her man Len Gould was sacked as editor and replaced by the legendary Chucky Parsons, at Rommel's request. But at the *Sunday Mirror*, where she still clings to power, the spate of pro-Fayed stories continues unabated. The 21 December issue, for example, carried two enormous puff pieces for Harrods and its boss. As a grateful Harrods spokesman told the paper: "We thank the *Sunday Mirror* for all the work they have done." Er, quite.

TV presenter Judy Finnegan of the *Richard and Judy Show*, who is off work for three months because of a hysterectomy, is eagerly awaiting a get well card — and letter of apology — from *Sunday Mirror* editor Bridget "Death" Rowe.

In November Finnegan's husband and co-host Richard Madeley spoke in a *Grauniad* interview about tabloid harassment and intrusion. He singled out Rowe's obsession with the couple and her belief that his wife's health problems were but a smokescreen for a marriage bust-up. Friendly hacks at the *Sunday Mirror* actually apologised for the harassment, but explained that their demented editor would not accept that her pet theory did not stand up.

The joke is that Rowe's own tangled private life (see *Eye* 935) would make more suitable tabloid fodder than that of the hapless Richard and Judy. But it seems unlikely that neighbours will spot hacks going through Rowe's dustbin, as happened at the Finnegan-Madeley household. For "Death" has a hotline to the Press Complaints Commission committee which recently announced a tough new code against such gross intrusion of privacy — she sits on it!

LORD HOLLICK's minions at the plummeting *Express* certainly exuded Christmas spirit following the death of long-serving cartoonist Michael Cummings.

Cummings's widow had to ring editor Richard Addis's office to complain that no one from the newspaper either sent flowers or attended her husband's funeral.

HACKWATCH

SUNDAY PORNOGRAPH

EYEBROWS were raised when Chris Anderson, a hack from the *News of the World*, was hired as news editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*, Britain's loftiest newspaper.

At the *Screws*, retired headmasters and conservative vicars and high court judges are regarded merely as potential victims, waiting to be caught with their trousers down. At the *Sunday Telegraph*, however, they are the readers. How would Anderson adjust?

The answer was simple: he wouldn't.

22 June 1997: A headline that might have come straight from the *News of the Screws*: "Outrage as Church is Used in Sex Film. I was Duped by Bondage Company, Says Vicar." This deeply important story, filling most of page three, is embellished with a still from a new sado-masochistic movie, *Preaching to the Perverted*, showing a woman in fishnets and leather brandishing a whip.

6 July: The contagion spreads to the foreign pages, with a lengthy preview of Berlin's Love Parade: "PVC, latex, fetish: these are the preferred dress codes at this outdoor orgy where anything — and everything — goes," *Sunday Telegraph* hack Marcus Warren salivates.

27 July: "French Refuse to Skimp on Silk Underwear." A full-page *Sunday Telegraph* survey reveals that France's lingerie industry is booming. "The important thing is the sensual feel of silk against the body," one sexy-underwear specialist explains.

17 August: Olympia is to hold Britain's first sex exhibition. "Erotica UK will provide three days of topless models, lingerie, sex toys, body painting and piercing, rude food, stainless steel dresses and fetish gear in November." Ever helpful, the *Torygraph* prints the telephone number of the Ticket Hotline.

24 August: "Big breasts are fashionable," is the opening sentence of a full-page story on the popularity of silicone implants. Elsewere on the news pages, we learn of a company "which aims to put a naked 'table dancing' club in every suburb of Britain".

14 September: "Girl Power Adverts Are Accused of Degrading Men," announces a headline. The report is copiously illustrated with samples of the offending items, such as a Lee Jeans advert which "shows a woman resting her stiletto on a man's buttocks".

21 September: An in-depth report by *Telegraph* hack James Langton on American men's passion for lifesize female dolls. "With four heads and two body combinations, the 5ft 7in 'supermodel' version and the shorter 'voluptuous' combination can be endlessly personalised with different hairstyles, eye shades and skin colouring," he reports. "Highly realistic — if the Baywatch fantasy of womanhood is realistic — the doll is complete in every detail."

5 October: A new sex education guide for children includes "explicit drawings" and "graphic illustrations of male and female body parts". As a public service, the *Telegraph* reproduces several extracts, including a description of female sexual organs. A few pages later, there's a half-page news story about Frenchwomen and their sexy underwear, complete with graphic illustrations: "These are the pictures for a new advertising campaign for Wonderbra that British women will not be seeing," readers are informed.

12 October: A big story written by Chris Boffey, a *Telegraph* hack recruited from the *Sunday Mirror*, begins in fine tabloid style: "Butlers needing advice on affairs of the heart or delicate points of etiquette — such as how to behave when confronted by a naked employer — can now enlist the help of their own agony aunt." Phwooargh, milady...

26 October: An attempt to raise the literary tone. "Romantic Face of Keats Hid Life of Lust and Wenching" is the headline on a news piece about Andrew Motion's biography of the poet. Elsewhere, another long story pursues the theme of bookish bonking. "At last it can be told," reveals Julia Llewellyn Smith. "The British Library Reading Room, best known as an academic haven, was in fact a hotbed of lust, passion and romance." The "racy revelations" come from film-maker Minkie Spiro, who has discovered the "secret passions" of this "serious pick-up joint" for authors.

16 November: Fearless hackette Julia Llewellyn Smith travels to Milan to study at "an Italian school of sex appeal", and presents her findings in a blockbusting news story. "Stilettos are obligatory," she learns from her teacher, one Pixie La Rouge. "You must always leave as much of your foot uncovered as possible. Then when you are talking, you can lean forward and slowly stroke it." Another essential prop for the seductive woman is a halter-neck top, "which draws maximum attention to her impressive cleavage". There is also a masterclass on how to remove stockings and suspender belts alluringly. A few pages later, the *Telegraph* carries a slavering report on the launch of a new erotic magazine for middle-aged men, described as "a titillating version of the *Spectator*". Unwilling to miss out on the fun, the *Telegraph*'s foreign news pages carry a long despatch from Bogota, disclosing that Colombian women "have been asked to refuse their husbands and boyfriends sex until they cease fighting". As the paper notes, the sex-strike coincides with "the nation's annual libido-fest, otherwise known as the Cartagena Beauty Queen Contest. The 23 contestants, one from each Colombian state, paraded all week in bikinis and shorts as millions tuned in to nightly updates on the details of each beauty's vital statistics".

23 November: With no apparent irony, the *Telegraph* publishes a full-page News Focus criticising women's magazines such as *Elle* and *Cosmo* for being "obsessed with sex". Naturally, such a detailed critique requires the citation of plenty of evidence, including "10 steps to the perfect orgasm".

30 November: A quiet week for the news pages, which can manage nothing better than a full account of the *Literary Review*'s Bad Sex Prize — including, of course, quotations from the winning entry: "Yasmin grinned and writhed on the bed, arching her back..."

14 December: The government has dropped pictures of women's breasts from a poster campaign promoting breast-feeding, after complaints that they were "too sexy". The *Telegraph* reproduces part of the poster — complete with pert nipple — to allow readers to decide. Elsewhere we learn that actress Liv Tyler, "the subject of a zillion adolescent fantasies", has fallen for film director Jake Scott. "Jake bought her thousands of pounds' worth of lingerie," a friend discloses.

21 December: A front-page headline brings grim tidings: "Now Brussels Gets Tough on Sex."

28 December: Even grimmer news: Mills & Boon novels, recently accused of becoming "too steamy", are reverting to chaste, pious, sex-free romance. "Maybe it's a reflection of our ageing society," the publisher suggests, "but our readers were demanding less sex and more spiritually fulfilling storylines."

Could they be disenchanted *Sunday Telegraph* readers, by any chance?

JUST FANCY THAT!

LOCAL government officers attending a day-long seminar on "Anti-Poverty Strategies" organised by the Chartered Institute of Housing and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation next month may be gravely disappointed.

Two thousand individuals and organisations have received a flyer promoting the seminar at the Royal College of Surgeons' splendid premises in Lincoln's Inn Fields (fee: £150 + VAT) which will discuss "more holistic approaches to tackling poverty, within the new framework of welfare to work".

Applications have been flooding in, for on the list of speakers appear two of the most profound thinkers in this field, albeit from opposite ends of the political spectrum, *viz*, Dave Spart and, er, Sir Bufton Tufton. What's more, successful initiatives to be discussed apparently include that beacon of Blairite new thinking, the "Neasden anti-poverty project".

Sam Lister, the organiser, told the *Eye* that the flyers had been dispatched while he was on holiday and before he had checked the proofs. He has regrettably had to send out a correction pointing out that his big-name speakers are unable to attend after all. Their places will be taken by less well-known figures from the world of, er, housing.

FOR more than 50 years successive governments have toyed with the idea of taxing one of the great job perks — free parking provided by employers — but have been talked out of it by Inland Revenue bigwigs based at Somerset House.

At the end of November control of Somerset House passed to a new lottery-funded trust which will use part of the building as an art gallery. One of the trustees' first acts was to announce the closure of the huge Somerset House car park where top taxmen have enjoyed, er, free parking for more than 50 years.

At the end of December details were revealed of a new Inland Revenue plan to tax employees whose perks include free parking by up to £400 a year. These events are, of course, entirely unrelated.

IF Inspector Knacker needs to find Jonathan Aitken, disgraced former Tory minister, he need look no further than his mother's delightful retreat on Ibiza.

The wielder of the trusty sword of truth has been holed up at Lady Aitken's farmhouse in Santa Eulalia for some time, apparently writing a "novel" which will clear his reputation.

Naturally Jonathan has appeared in the local gossip columns, courtesy of the distinguished *Ibiza Now*, which described him as "tall, dark and oh so handsome", intelligent and witty, with a fund of "fascinating stories".

On 15 July 1997, the Disciplinary Committee of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) found that a member, Adrian Bradbury Ansdell of BDO Stoy Hayward, Garrick House, High Street, Old Fletton, Peterborough, was liable to disciplinary action under the then bye-law 27(a)(i) in that he produced accounts which he ought to have known were accurate.

Certified Accountant

DIANABALLS

"Mix the Beanie Baby collection craze with the Princess Diana memorabilia rush and pandemonium is assured. Princess, a cuddly royal purple bear in memory of Diana, is due in selected stores in the next two weeks... Princess comes with a customised Beanie Baby poem attached:

Like an angel, she came from heaven above
She shared her compassion, her pain, her love
She only stayed with us long enough to teach
The world to share, to give, to reach."

— *USA Today* (submitted by Ian R. Hills).

"The Spirit of National Day celebrations came alive in a variety of activities for the young and older people at the University of Bahrain National Day Carnival yesterday. Naila Salman Al Khalifa posed as the late Queen of Hearts, Princess Diana..."

— *Bahrain Tribune*.

Coming soon: Disney's Frankenstein

FIERCESOME attacks on Labour's welfare reforms by snipers in the increasingly restless Liberal Democrat infantry caused panic at Downing Street.

So concerned was the high command by the Lib Dems' off-message response to planned benefit cuts, the spin doctors not only invited a thrilled Paddy Pantsdown back to 10 Downing Street, but showed him findings from focus group research on public attitudes to "welfare" and "scroungers".

Surprisingly the spin doctors had discovered that if selected members of the public were asked if they approved of scroungers getting benefits, they did not. This provided the rationale for cutting payments to single mums and the wheelchair bound. "What was more surprising was that Ashdown seemed just as impressed by our techno wizardry," reported a Number 10 insider.

Meanwhile fury continues to mount within Labour party at Tony Blair's proposed reforms, particularly those aimed at those on disability benefit. Nowhere is that anger more intense than in the prime minister's Durham back yard. There, some senior, hitherto ultra loyal Labour councillors have written angry letters to Downing Street demanding to know why former mine workers, who were deliberately invalided out of the coal industry by the previous government as a way of massaging the unemployment figures, should now face the ignominy of further cuts to their miserable allowances if cuts to disability benefits go through.

PS: More angry letters will arrive from County Durham once Labour councillors discover that the government has signed up to a European directive aimed at cutting concessionary coal to miners' widows. They will be especially angry when they discover that even the pit-closing former Tory energy minister Tim Eggar promised the then Labour opposition that he would never ever consent to it being implemented.

THE appointment to Tony Blair's staff of former hack Phil Bassett may have delighted his old chum Alastair Campbell, under whom Bassett will serve, but it may be less good news to Peter Mandelson.

While Mandelson has overall charge of the government's policy presentation, Bassett will report to Campbell and the prime minister on the "creation and presentation of policy".

Observers recall the occasion in the autumn when the Mandelson, the minister without portfolio, presented a revised policy on the national minimum wage to a surprised Labour conference fringe meeting. It was a *Times* journalist who alerted readers to his deviation from Labour's manifesto commitment, and the hack was, er, Mr Blair's new adviser on the "creation and presentation of policy", Phil Bassett.

REBEL Labour Euro MEP Ken Coates was surprised to learn from the *Today* programme that he had been "summoned to appear before his local party" — but he should not have been surprised by the summons.

It was instigated by none other than Reg Race, a former leather-jacketed spartist MP for Wood Green, who had entertained hopes of following in Coates' footsteps once the latter had resigned as a Labour MEP. Sadly for Race, such loyalty is misplaced: not only will Coates' Chesterfield and North Nottingham constituency be swallowed by a multi-member mega East Midlands constituency, but Tony Blair intends to handpick the candidates.

Anyone with a history of being in the Labour party need not apply — and that includes Race.

THE director of the gas and oil division at the troubled department of trade and industry has thrown in his job days after the government decided to put a stop to any more gas-fired power stations. His departure, says the DTI, is not a resignation but simply early retirement at 55. Hmm.

The department is in a state of civil war. It has never really grown into one department. The board of trade was spatchcocked with the department of industry, and then the department of energy was thrown in. It was supposed to provide Michael Heseltine with a patch big enough for someone of his ego (*astonishing ability, shurely?*) But it has never been out of trouble: over helicopters and arms sales and Tiny Rowland and Mohamed Fayed and leaked memos and coal versus nuclear — and now the dash into and out of gas.

The high flyer who has had enough, John Michell, will go on to make a good living, probably in the gas industry. He has regularly been talked about as the civil servant at the centre of the intellectual ferment inside the DTI. He was the man to whom Clare Spottiswoode, the gas regulator, sent a bouquet of flowers when she won her job. He has long been regarded by Andrew Warren, director of the Association for the Conservation of Energy, as the most significant figure in the games people play at the DTI.

Warren told the *Eye*: "Within the DTI, there are certain officials who have their own agenda. They do not like energy saving or renewable energy and what they want is to carry on doing what they have always been doing, like promoting coal or oil or gas or nuclear power. I have been at receptions where I have heard under-secretaries saying, 'Wait until after Kyoto [the emissions conference] and we'll get rid of this garbage'."

Now, after Kyoto, the temperature can be expected to rise. The DTI suffered the humiliation of seeing the coal crisis handed to Geoffrey Robinson and the treasury. The respite he negotiated is due to expire on 31 May. The powerful department of the environment, transport and the regions under John Prescott will be wanting to see a reduction in the coal-burn *and* the gas-burn, while the rival barons in the DTI will be fighting their corners. And the nuclear lobby is becoming ever more active. A happy new year it will not be.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"At the annual Christmas party for children of lobby hacks last week, the 'surprise mystery guest' turned out to be Peter Mandelson — who was immediately asked for his autograph by the 10-year-old daughter of political hackette Julia Langdon... 'Tell your mother she'd better start writing more positively about the government — or else,' snarled the Santa Without Portfolio."

— *Private Eye*, 12 December 1997.

"The particular question they were actually asking as the boys and girls filed out of Parliament at the end of term yesterday was: why is Peter Mandelson still in office? Or, as one MP I bumped into on the seasonal circuit hissed — and in complete seriousness — why hasn't Mandelson been sacked yet?"

— Julia Langdon, Glasgow *Herald* 23 December 1997.

FORMER colleagues of James Winston, onetime councillor for Tony Blair's Barnsbury ward in Islington who was convicted in December of fraudulently obtaining £8,000 housing benefit (*Eye* 940), have quickly distanced themselves from their dishonest chum.

One close associate, however, has remained quiet on the subject: fellow Ulster exile Kate Hoey, the Labour MP for Vauxhall. She has worked closely over the years with Winston in Democracy Now, the pro-Unionist Labour pressure group founded by Hoey in 1992. Despite his conviction, Winston remains secretary of the group.

By one of life's little ironies Hoey, a reformed revolutionary socialist, is now PPS to Frank Field, rightwing minister for welfare reform. As she and her boss "get tough" on housing benefit fraud, it is

NEW LABOUR, NEW DISNEY

odd she has not found time to condemn Winston for his cheating, which involved claiming benefit from both Haringey and Islington councils simultaneously.

Presumably she is working behind the scenes putting pressure on home secretary Jack Straw to review Winston's wimpy sentence of 80 hours' community service and have him thrown into jail.

THE prosecution of Bernard Carr, Hartlepool councillor and former election agent to Peter Mandelson, was discontinued on 22 December after the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) asked local magistrates to stop the case.

Carr had been arrested in the early hours of the morning last August with a teenage boy in a public lavatory and charged with gross indecency.

A spokeswoman said that a recommendation to discontinue a prosecution was "not particularly unusual". It is good to know.

MORE than seven months into a Labour administration and Whitehall mandarins are still having difficulty adapting to the new regime.

Nowhere is disenchantment more apparent than at the department for education and employment (DfEE), where one civil servant recently felt moved to express his opinion on the new secretary of state in no uncertain terms. Unfortunately the man picked a particularly inopportune moment to vent his spleen for next door the tape recorders were whirring away as colleagues dictated the contents of David Blunkett's red boxes for the day.

Every expletive was captured for posterity and duly listened to by the minister that night. Incensed by the unflattering portrait presented of him, Blunkett rang his underlings to rage at this insubordination suggesting instant dismissal was on the cards... until it was gently pointed out to him that, as minister of state for employment, among other things, he ought to know that instant dismissal is frowned upon.

WELSH Tories are revolting against their exclusion from the board of management William Hague is setting up to try to revive the party's fortunes.

After the Welsh party's executive met at Builth Wells to discuss the reform package, Audrey Hull, who chairs what is left of the party west of Offa's Dyke, insisted that Wales would be mortally insulted if it was sidelined. "I've told Cecil Parkinson, our chairman, that I'd resign unless we got a seat," she steamed, adding darkly that Welsh Tories may follow their Scottish counterparts down the autonomy road.

Ffion Hague (née Jenkins), as Welsh as leeks and laverbread... where are you?

'Backbiter'

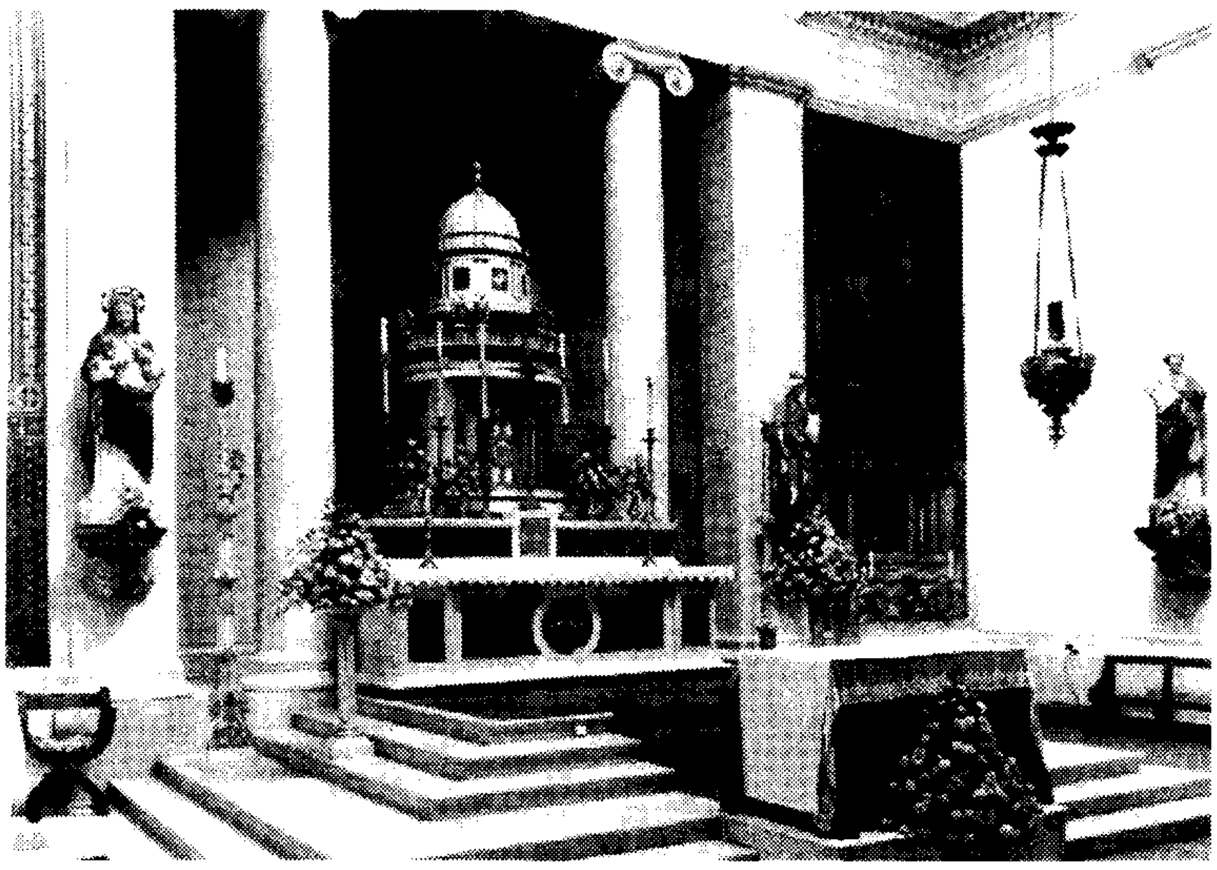
NOOKS and CORNERS

HELL hath no fury like a bishop scorned. And the Archbishop of Cardiff was defeated in his attempt to get rid of the Roman Catholic church of St Francis Xavier in Hereford.

As I described in *Eyes* 840 & 887, this is a remarkable survival and a beautiful symbol of post-Emancipation Catholicism: a Greek Revival church built by the Jesuits in 1837-39 entirely untouched by the burgeoning Gothic Revival — Pugin, indeed, dismissed it as a "Catholic concert hall".

Well, four years ago, it was proposed for replacement by a nice, exciting new supermarket-style worship centre somewhere on the outskirts of the city. But the parishioners and people of Hereford fought back. The Friends of St Francis Xavier were created and the archbishop's plans thwarted. Long overdue repairs to the fabric of the church are now being carried out at a cost of £470,000 paid for by English Heritage and the national lottery fund.

But there remains the interior which, with sympathetic later 19th century additions, retains its original character and arrangements, with its dominating high altar like a miniature *tempietto* between two Greek Ionic columns. Naturally this offends the clergy who, having failed to destroy it altogether, now insist on a radical re-ordering because "it is in the nature of a living church community that its place of worship must change to meet the ways we worship in every different generation". So the high altar must be chopped up and brought forward, the tabernacle lowered, the flanking side altars removed, the sanctuary floor raised, the font moved and the seating thrown out. And all this is to be paid for by a 75 percent heritage lottery grant.



These days the Roman Catholic church likes to pay lip service to participation by the laity, so a "consultation document" was issued in November by the new parish priest, Dom Simon McGurk (who lists his interests as "people, travel, architecture and art [practical and historical] theology and liturgy, most sports..."). But, lest there be any doubt about what this really mens, Fr McGurk makes it clear that "the grant funding for Phase II is *not* guaranteed and will almost certainly be withheld if there is local dissention — hence the high profile of this consultation process and the necessity of it leading to general agreement". Well there isn't general agreement — or rather there is, but not what the hierarchy has in mind. The Friends of St Francis Xavier polled its members and discovered that, while seven were in favour of a general reordering and another 18 were prepared to accept particular alterations, 195 stated that they wanted no change whatever. Rather, they want the interior — with its existing painted decoration — properly restored. Surely this is an option which deserves respect?

Er, no. As usual it is claimed that reordering is mandatory because "the Second Vatican Council laid down norms for worship to be observed by future generations of Roman Catholics seeking to profess their faith in the public assembly", and that the Diocesan Art and Architecture Committee, "set up in response to the liturgy decree of the Second Vatican Council, must have as its primary concern the church building as a theatre of worship for the living community far into the 21st century".

Well, never mind that the existing plan of this "Catholic concert hall" is ideal for modern worship, the Vatican also insisted that any reordering should respond to the existing character of a church building and that works of art should be carefully retained. I never tire of pointing this out, but it is something the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Britain usually chooses to forget. Public money has paid for the restoration of the fabric of this important and beautiful listed building in the centre of Hereford. Why should more public money be spent on spoiling the result?

OF COURSE this all comes down to the morality of ownership and to what extent works of art and architecture are in the public realm. The late, lamented Jim Lees-Milne embarked on his noble career of saving country houses for the National Trust after reacting to the loathsome spectacle of a house owner assaulting paintings and the statuary in his own home with horsewhip and rifle. This is worth bearing in mind in the case of the sale of the Wilton bust, which I reported in Eye 938.

I am glad to put the record straight now that not only the Council for the Care of Churches but also the Salisbury Diocesan Advisory Committee both strongly opposed granting a faculty for this sale. The problem was the judgement by the chancellor, John Ellison, at the consistory court that "this case is as special as it could be. I do not share the view of those who suggest that the grant of faculty will cause anger and risk the continuance of the ecclesiastical exemption. The bust belongs to Lord Pembroke and he is the person to decide what to do with his own personal property."

Well, owners of listed buildings are no longer allowed to wreck or destroy listed buildings as they choose, so why should the descendants of benefactors be able to strip the contents of our churches when short of a few readies? This judgement was wrong — and dangerous.

'Piloti'

Pseuds Corner

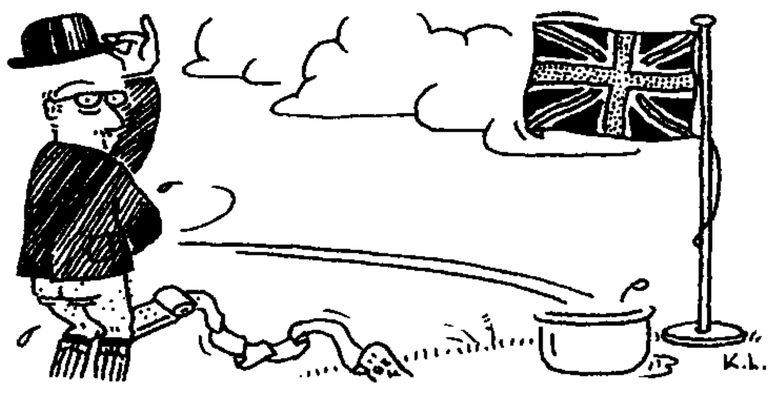
October 10: The New Earth Male — and the woman's role: Co-led with Martin Davison, this workshop suggests that in the very near future men will be able to discuss Earth's issues with the Earth herself. We offer the opportunity, particularly for men, to understand the route to this acknowledgement that they, the new Earth men, will be the mouthpiece of the soul-infused earth and are the key to leadership in the future.

Leaflet advertising workshops on Annie Wilson's book *Making The Most Of The Life You've Got — A Manual For The New Millennium*

December is a time for buying Christmas presents for one's godchildren. Toys might suffice for their birthdays, but at Christmas they deserve something grander. Asprey's 9ct gold oval cufflinks, at £350 the pair, can be engraved with their initials — M.A.B.S. for Brent and Tess Sadler's son Matthew, and C.H.J.H. for Simon and Diana Heffer's son Johnnie. Once the little chaps are grown up they'll have all the godparental paraphernalia of silver napkin rings, cigarette boxes, hair-brushes, pens, letter-openers, hip flasks and so on. But cuff-links have to be gold and of course they have to be Asprey's.

ANDREW ROBERTS (Asprey Advertisement)
The Spectator

Fluxus advocated an artless art that could be produced by anyone, provided he or she was prepared to take the principle of artlessness (at some level) seriously. Its exhibitions often featured distinctly Pythonesque activities: peeing into a pot while singing the national anthem; raising and lowering one's bowler hat in accordance with



numbers on an Olivetti adding-machine print-out; peeling off an array of different-coloured knickers from underneath one's skirt.

RACHEL WITHERS
The Guardian

Since, as a reader, I find myself now interested only in genius (talent, I can get at home), my book of the year, naturally, is Matt Groening's *The Simpsons: A Complete Guide* (Harper-Collins, £14.99), a luscious companion to what is currently the greatest ongoing work of art I know in any medium. In second place would be Douglas Hofstadter's *Le Ton Beau De Marot* (Bloomsbury, £30) — shamefully ignored in the books pages of the British press. A 600-page fantasia on and around the theme of translation, *Le Ton Beau* is engaging, droll, polyglot, silly, infuriating, erudite, often moving and utterly *sui generis*.

GILBERT ADAIR
Guardian

Anyone of icon status, like me, realises that there has to be an interplay of deep unconscious fantasy between you and your audience, and I don't think any of the other women involved in this series are icons. People like Bowie and Hendrix and me, we summon up a whole consciousness. We are not just a moment in time. It is an ongoing thing. We are deeply enmeshed in people's lives. They grow and we are still with them.

SANDIE SHAW
Daily Telegraph

American culture, by contrast, is too universal to be particular, while American interest in American culture is too particular to be universal.

JAMES WOOD
Guardian

Pseud of the Year:
SIMON BARNES, *The Times*

Pseud Journal of the Year
(a massive 20 entries): *Guardian*

CONTRIBUTORS: Victoria Bull, Anon, Peter Barnes, Sabina George, Andrew Jones, B. Piccitto.

£10 paid for entries

EYE TV

Mr White Goes To Westminster (Channel 4)
King Leek (ITV)
Cold Enough For Snow (BBC1)

FOR the last decade, the if-in-doubt commission for every broadsheet arts page has been: The Death Of The Single Play. The thesis went that schedulers — obsessed with audience habit-forming and economies of scale in production — had become obsessed with series and serials, where viewers, sets and costumes could all be called on more than once. This was the end of the television tradition which had produced *Cathy Come Home, Bar Mitzvah Boy, Licking Hitler, Blue Remembered Hills* **and, er, many others.**

Like most journalistic conventional wisdoms, this one has just inconveniently been contradicted by the facts. The schedules have recently been awash with single dramas. Guy Jenkin, one half of the *Drop The Dead Donkey* team, did **Mr White Goes To Westminster** for Channel 4. William Ivory — whose *Common As Muck* was one of the serial triumphs of last year — wrote **King Leek** for ITV. And Jack Rosenthal — big daddy of the one-off, responsible for *Bar Mitzvah Boy* and dozens more — was represented by **Cold Enough For Snow** on BBC1. But, before arts eds rush to commission pieces on The Resurrection Of The Single Play, it's worth looking at what we got.

Mr White Goes To Westminster was the latest example of the most fashionable kind of one-drama: the topical-political. Jenkin has done a few of these now. *A Very Open Prison* was about a kind of Michael Howard in a crisis; *Crossing The Floor* was about a variation of Alan Howarth leaving the Tories to serve under a sort of Tony Blair. Now *Mr White Goes To Westminster* was about a bit of a Martin Bell leaving TV to stand for parliament against a Neil Hamilton clone. (It seems a safe bet that one of the first things the controllers found on their desks on coming back from the hols this week was a Jenkin proposal for a play about a cabinet minister — called, say, John Grass — whose teenage son is caught dealing drugs.)

Its predecessors have won numerous awards but *Mr White Goes To Westminster* exposed the serious problems with plays that shadow the facts. Ben White (Bill Patterson) was a telly foreign correspondent who, disillusioned by the dumbing down of news, agreed to run as an independent against a Tory MP who'd been taking cash for questions. The MP was a drip with a pushy wife. The TV reporter won the election.

Satire traditionally works by exaggerating reality, but Jenkin seemed to be trying for a new kind which merely reproduces it. Then, having shown the viewers things they already knew, he confusingly switched to telling them things which had no connection with reality at all. The Bell character launched a private members' bill against the tabloid press but was brought down by the resumption of an affair with a Labour MP played by Samantha Bond. This was inept. The second-half plot would only have any point if it were trying to say that Martin Bell was secretly shagging one of Blair's Babes, which presumably he isn't. And it is dangerous for political satires to have *entirely* sympathetic central characters — Jenkin was so clearly on the side of the Bell figure, that his little speeches about his integrity as a reporter became embarrassing.

King Leek was the kind of thing which might have passed muster in a run of 20 Plays For Today or Wednesday Plays but looked hopelessly exposed as a seasonal special.

Tim Healey played a northern piss-artist and allotment bore who bets his house on his ability to win the best leek prize at't show. Ghastly northern stereotypes — including a daft grandpa with loose teeth and a foul tongue — exchange dialogue that could have been written by a Serbo Croat armed with videos of *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* and *The Likely Lads*.

The running gag was the hero's use of his wife's urine as the secret ingredient in his fertiliser. It was best not to dwell on the fact that this plot-twist seemed to be dictated solely by a pun on the word "leek".

In an echo of a plot, the play itself clearly dreamed of growing to six times the size. Its ambition to become a series was exposed by its description as a "Comedy Premiere". ITV clearly believes in singles about as much as a dating agency does.

Which brings us, by happy contrast, to *Cold Enough For Snow*. Although a touch sentimental, Jack Rosenthal's 32nd single play for television was a typically finely crafted piece of work: cunning changes of pace and mood, character-specific language, surprise ending. But the outcome of the commission was unsurprising. Rosenthal has learned his craft, beginning with low-profile dramas and moving to high-profile ones.

In his day, the reward for a writer who had made their name in single plays was an invitation to write an original serial. These days, the one-off is the cherry offered to the writer — like Ivory or Jenkin — who has pulled in the millions with a serial or sitcom. It shows.

'Square Eyes'

MEDIA NEWS

JOHN BIRT's obsession with the BBC's new yoof-oriented, resource-devouring 24-hour TV "news" service — which nobody save Birt watches or wants — is bleeding the established television news and current affairs departments dry.

Domestic TV news is now so impoverished it often starts the day bereft of cameramen. When Jack Straw emerged from Broadcasting House after giving a long radio interview during the furore about his son's alleged activities, he was faced with a barrage of TV cameras and reporters — from everywhere except the BBC, whose sole cameraman on duty was elsewhere. Hacks at TV Centre had to beg their rivals at ITN for footage to cover the story.

This was not the first time ITN has saved the BBC's bacon in recent weeks — gaps in its coverage of Remembrance Sunday (*Eye* 938) and the death of Michael Hutchence were also plugged with ITN pictures.

PROOF that the lunatics have taken over the asylum at the BBC comes from the corporation's Welsh sports department.

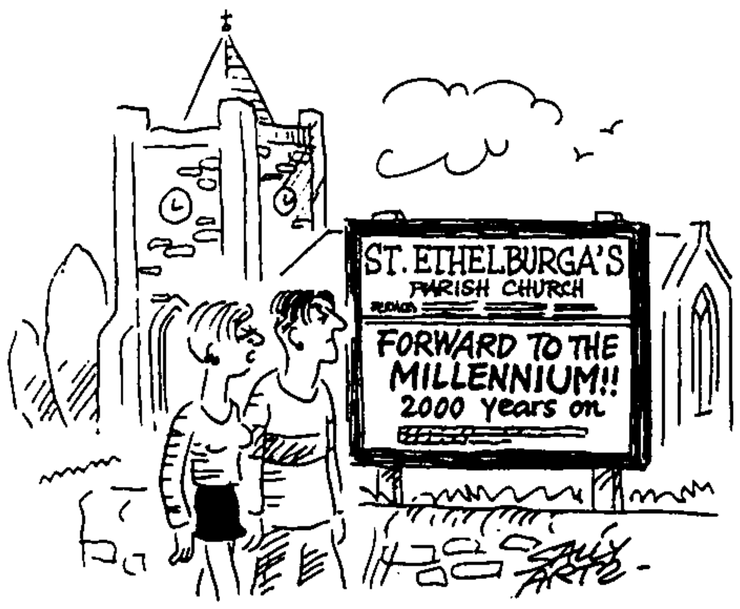
Head of resources for BBC Wales Roger Farmer has announced that his department has *not* won the tender to provide outside broadcast facilities for BBC Wales Sport, and the work will go to an independent private company.

However, the future of the BBC's OB unit is secure as it has contracts with both S4C and '10' Limited, both private independent broadcasters. Thus it is that BBC Wales provides resources for independent companies... while BBC internal departments use... independent resources. In a Birtian world it all makes perfect sense.

***ARIEL*, the BBC staff magazine better known as *Pravda*, recently featured Cyril Gates, head of BBC customer services, describing his fact-finding mission to America.**

Gates travelled from Connecticut to Disney World to learn how the Americans keep their customers happy, hoping to pass their skills on to Auntie.

BBC staff reading the article had one question to ask: was this the same Cyril Gates, who as head of BBC Resources North in Manchester left behind a budget deficit and a string of redundancies?



"Why must they drag religion into it?"

Gowrie,
chairman,
The Ars Council of England,
14 Great Peter Street,
London SW1P 4NQ

Financial Times

WHILE many BBC staff live in daily fear of losing their jobs, a select few independent producers have never had it so good — thanks to the John Birt edict that outside firms can and often do grab work formerly done in-house.

Take, for instance, the unstoppable rise of former Radio 2 producer Nick Barraclough, who resigned from the BBC six years ago to set up his own production company Smooth Operations, run from a shed at the end of his garden in Cambridgeshire. Almost immediately he was commissioned to present and produce a weekly series of country and western programmes for Radio 2, *New Country*. The show has been running for five years without a single break, earning the grateful Barraclough around £2,000 a week.

With *New Country* paying the rent, Smooth Operations went on to acquire lots more business from Barraclough's old employers: to the amazement and envy of his competitors, he is now responsible for no less than 80 percent of all Radio 2's country commissions. He recently landed yet another plum job producing the weekly *Folk on Two* show, formerly done in-house, and last week he presented a Radio 2 series on line-dancing.

But now, in his quest for world domination, Barraclough may have gone too far in striking a lucrative deal to promote a particular record label. A few months ago he was to be heard on commercial radio voicing a series of adverts for HMV country albums; shortly before Christmas he was the voice behind a new HMV television commercial for a line-dancing CD.

How does this tally with the BBC guidelines on conflicts of interest, which warn presenters against "inappropriate outside commitments" which might "improperly influence, *or be thought to influence*, BBC programmes"?

"The commercial he's doing is just a voice-over, there's no name and no face," a BBC spokeswoman told the *Eye*, overlooking the fact that Barraclough is a radio presenter and his voice is therefore his best-known feature. She added that DJs "can promote music as long as it's not a direct link-up with what they're doing for the BBC".

The records he has promoted for HMV so far are country-music compilations and line-dancing CDs; the programmes he makes for Radio 2 are about, er, country music and line-dancing. Any similarities are of course entirely coincidental.

Plugged In

20 Things To Tell Your Friends About 'Friends':

Number 20: The new, fourth series of Friends can only be seen on Sky One, from Thursday January 8 at 9pm.

Sun

Submitted by Nick Procter

An occasional column devoted to cross-media plugs masquerading as news.

THE YES MEN: A TALE OF LIQUID ENGINEERING

THE YEAR of Engineering Success or YES, as it likes to call itself, was a campaign to change the public's perception of engineers and encourage "gifted young people" to enter the profession. It was supposed to run only for 1997, but the buffoons behind the scheme are now asking the government and industrialists for £8m to create an "ongoing YES initiative" which will link engineering "to the millennium celebrations and beyond". Before industry minister John Battle and various captains of industry hand over more dosh, they might care to examine what has happened to their previous investment.

YES had a budget of £1.5m — £500,000 from the government and the rest from companies such as BT, British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce. The operations director, Peter Waller, is a former police constable. The director-general is one Mary Harris, a British Gas engineer more popularly known as Scary Mary. The third member of the triumvirate, Michael Hird, was given the title "communications director" — even though he told colleagues that he wouldn't speak to the press. Having installed themselves in swish offices at 1 Great Cumberland Place, they set about spending the loot. Where did the money go?

Half a million pounds went on sponsoring a *Tomorrow's World* show at the National Exhibition Centre, which turned out to be a costly flop. More than £30,000 was paid to a PR agency which wrote four press releases and devised a campaign based on "theme days": surely you remember such highlights of 1997 as National Energy Day and National Construction Day? A website was created — and then promptly forgotten about. A bogus award for "engineering excellence" was presented to John Birt, on the assumption that it would get top priority on BBC news programmes; it went unreported. Oh, and Mary Harris spent £7 having her eyebrows plucked at Selfridges — and then claimed it on expenses.

Another important item in the budget was, er, booze. "I have a problem with my liver," Waller told a journalist, "and not one but two eminent surgeons have told me that champagne is the only alcohol I can safely drink."

Waller's expense claims certainly bear out his taste for high living. As early as 14 January 1997, starting the year as he meant to go on, he entertained a guest to lunch at the Capital Hotel in Knightsbridge. After a bottle of white wine, five glasses of champagne, two whiskies and a brandy, the bill for two came to a modest £191.75. Many similar lunch bills were reclaimed by Waller over the next few months — unusual behaviour from a man running what is supposed to be a registered charity.

Though he lives in Sussex, Waller sometimes preferred to stay in London at his beloved Capital Hotel (£264 per night) or the even grander St James's Club (£276) — again at the charity's expense. He also organised several enjoyable out-of-town forays. A one-day "strategy conference" for 28 senior executives and sponsors was held on 23 October 1996 at the luxury Wyck House Hotel in Stow-on-the-Wold. Hird, the uncommunicative communications director, arrived the previous evening and got through £53-worth of wine with his dinner. The next night, he and his 27 colleagues ran up a bar bill of £1,082.

The session was judged to have been a great success — so much so that another one was arranged last January. This time, the bill for overnight accommodation, dinner and lunch came to £7,275 of which a lip-smacking £1,285 went on wines and spirits.

But there was more to YES than drinking sessions. At least £50,000 was paid to a firm in Wiltshire, SAS Events, for an odd variety of services: providing a bodyguard for Damon Hill when he came to open the YES-sponsored show at the NEC; recruiting a database manager for the London HQ; and coming up from Salisbury to London to see if the Roof Gardens would be an acceptable venue for a launch party. In breach of YES's own rules, the contract with SAS Events was not put out to competitive tender. According to a boardroom document seen by the *Eye*, Peter Waller advised that the usual formalities should be bypassed because of "time pressures" — and, besides, "SAS have the necessary skills and resources to carry out the works... SAS have offered a fair and realistic bid". He should know: before joining YES, Waller was employed as a consultant by... SAS Events.

Another company which benefited from YES largesse was Dovedale Communications of Rickmansworth, Herts, which was paid about £9,000 by Michael Hird for providing laminated posters and "pop-up display units". By an amazing coincidence, until joining SAS, Michael Hird worked for... Dovedale Communications.

As a charity, and all-round good cause, YES managed to obtain some services for nothing. Its office was provided free by British Gas, as was a huge, state-of-the-art photocopier. And yet vast quantities of photocopying work were still farmed out to a firm called Colourstat Ltd in Rochester Row, London SW1. In April last year, by which time Colourstat had already earned many thousands of pounds from the charity, YES's finance director Rod Witheridge drew up a "master agreement" to reduce the "timing problems associated with purchase requests and orders, while still maintaining necessary audit rigour". Henceforth, Peter Waller would be "authorised to provide verbal requests [to Colourstat] for services up to a maximum of £1,000 per request". What Witheridge may not have realised — but a search at Companies House confirms — is that Colourstat is wholly owned by Peter Waller and his wife.

Did the Year of Engineering Success achieve *anything*? Well, almost: after a sympathetic piece in the *Daily Mail* last year, several readers rang the YES office to inquire about careers in engineering. An excited PR woman passed on the good news to Peter Waller, and asked what she should say to the callers.

"Tell them we're not a bloody employment agency," he growled.

COMPUTER NEWS

BAD news at the Vehicle Inspectorate, where a new computer system due to be completed last year has been hit by technical problems and won't now be launched before May at the earliest.

As the inspectorate's chief executive Ron Oliver said, the delay is "disappointing". And who is the tardy supplier with whom the inspectorate is working? Er, step forward our old friend EDS, the Texan computer giant famous for its brilliant UK work at the Child Support Agency and the Student Loans Company (*Eyes passim*).

EDS has also been having trouble in the London borough of Bent where the computer firm has a £50m outsourcing deal with the council but has been hit by financial penalties after failing to meet targets. The council accused EDS of underperforming in collection of council tax and of losing vital files. EDS must now pay Bent £9,000 to cover shortfalls, though it insists it is not at fault and has actually improved tax collection.

EDS also faces penalties in Wandsworth where the borough council accuses it of failing to meet targets in responding to housing benefit claims.

"I've begun to experiment with surrealist surrealism!"

DOING THE ROUNDS

Pain Special

IF YOU had crippling pain following an illness, operation or accident, you might expect someone to sort it out. Quickly. Certainly we have the knowledge and the technology.

As Dr Douglas Justins, a consultant anaesthetist and pain management specialist at London's St Thomas' hospital, puts it: "It's 151 years since the first anaesthetic was given in Britain and in this day and age it's totally unacceptable for anyone still to be suffering acute pain anywhere in a hospital."

Alas, an audit commission report, *Anaesthesia under Examination*, has found that only 57 percent of hospitals have acute pain control teams who have been proven to reduce and often eliminate suffering, and that the amount of pain you suffer can depend on which hospital the ambulance drops you off at.

All this prompted Leo Strunin, president of the Royal College of Anaesthetists and a consultant at the Royal London, to accuse NHS trusts of failing to take patients' suffering seriously. "Many do not see it as a quality issue. The funds and leadership just aren't there to provide proper pain relief in hospital." How comforting.

Earlier last year another report found that children, too, from neonates on special care upwards, suffered unnecessary pain and that new approaches such as needle-free analgesia aren't filtering through. In adults, half of all cancer patients and a third of cardiac patients suffer unnecessary pain. Although there has been a 41 percent increase in the number of consultant anaesthetists over the last 10 years, this has been well outstripped by demand and 13 percent of posts are vacant. Many trusts have barely enough anaesthetists to put people to sleep, let alone administer epidurals to labouring women or run pain clinics.

At undergraduate level training in pain management is often pitiful, and many health professionals qualify with quaintly stoical views about pain and a reticence to uses opiod painkillers. Morphine is a brilliant painkiller and has been used for centuries, and yet many doctors either refuse to give it or don't give enough for fear of overdosing or causing addiction. "The reluctance to prescribe morphine is a long standing problem based on tradition, misconceptions, misinformation and a lack of education," says Justins. "It is perceived as a very dangerous drug."

In fact even when patients are on large doses to control their pain, the chances of becoming a drug addict are "infinitesimally small." Over time, the body does become tolerant to the drug and larger doses are needed, but these don't result in overdose. It's far more likely for pain to kick in because a doctor is too reticent to increase the dose.

All this unnecessary suffering has been helped by the euthanasia debate, which has incorrectly led some patients to assume that when a doctor gives you morphine he or she is trying to finish you off. So the best pain relief we have remains very misunderstood and underused, as roofer Rod Buck can testify. "I fell 30 feet off a roof and landed on my back. I broke most of my ribs and the broken ends penetrated the lungs... In intensive care, the pain was overwhelming. It was out of this world... it actually paralysed you; you couldn't move; all your muscles clamped up and you were absolutely frozen rigid."

After two weeks of pain and much forceful complaining, Rod got what he needed. "I was rescued by an anaesthetic consultant who had a special interest in pain management and prescribed morphine for me. But once I got on the general wards, I was aware of a subtle disapproval on the part of many of the staff of me being on morphine, rather as if I was a sort of an alcoholic or child molester, certainly a person of weak moral fibre, because I was needing to take this stuff.

"I think my experience was unusual because I demanded and got adequate analgesia. I think a lot of people give up in the face of determined opposition of the nursing and junior medical staff." Take a tip from Rod. If you suffer excruciating pain in 1998, ask for morphine — and a pain specialist. Happy new year.

M.D.

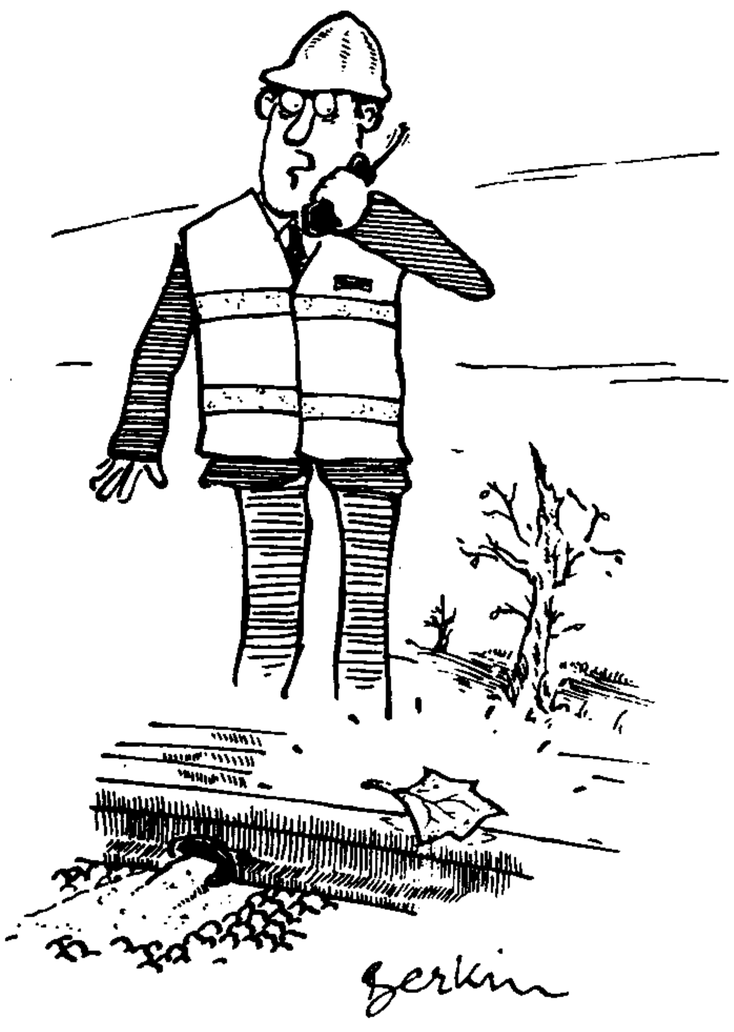
"Things always seem much worse at four in the morning, darling"

SIGNAL FAILURES

Focus on Great Western Trains

A CONTENDER for the 1997 Mandelson Prize must be Great Western Trains, which, instead of hanging its head in contrition, put a positive spin on an abysmal year by announcing that customer satisfaction "has increased in eight top categories".

One of those top categories is safety and security; and Great Western is proud to have improved safety by producing leaflets and posters "advising customers on how to keep their belongings safe on train". Curiously, the deaths of seven GW customers in the Southall crash in September do not figure in this category.



"Euston, we have a problem..."

Another top category is smoothness of ride. The reported satisfaction here will come as news to one *Eye* reader who wrote to GW in August: "You can't drink or read a book between Didcot and Swindon because the train jumps around so much".

GW forgot to say whether customers were satisfied with train punctuality — surely a top category. And we do know what the Rail Users' Consultative Committee for Western England thinks of GW's consistent failure to meet its punctuality targets in the summer — the watchdog took the unusual step of summoning GW managers to explain the delays. One irate commuter told the company in November: "You have not managed to have a single 18.23 from Didcot to Bristol on time for the last two weeks. Then this service was totally cancelled last Friday and again yesterday."

Another customer wrote to the *Eye* after engineering works forced passengers off a GW train from Swansea. Buses were laid on between Bridgend and Cardiff. In the confusion one passenger left a raincoat on the train — and was astonished to find it still in place some time later on the train which took them from Cardiff to London. It suited the rail bureaucracy to run the train empty over an alternative line while the passengers were rattled around in buses.

GW may have learnt its spin technique from the office of rail passenger franchising (Opraf), which announced in October — without waiting for the outcome of the Southall inquiry where GW's use of safety devices is coming under scrutiny — that GW was doing such a good job its franchise would continue for an extra three years (until 2006). Opraf trumpeted three improvements in return for the extension: new trains to be acquired; a half-hourly service to Bristol brought forward by one year; and a cut in subsidy from £438m to £348m. Only lower down does Opraf's press release admit: "The half hourly service to Cardiff, which was to have started in May 2000, will begin in summer 2001."

Those improvements were necessary because Opraf cocked up on the original franchise deal. Opraf accepted GW's business plan although it was clearly based on a half-baked scheme to split InterCity 125s in half. This would need big investment in modifications, probably including new vehicles. It was unlikely GW could borrow the necessary finance considering the trains had already been in intensive service for more than 20 years and the investment would not result in extra seating capacity. So the new trains are essential anyway, and bringing forward the half hourly Bristol service is a lame atonement for GW's inability to run half hourly trains on the longer route to South Wales by 2000, as promised.

The reduction in subsidy follows an embarrassing miscalculation by Opraf, which handed out disproportionately large subsidies with the first few franchises (including GW). A study last April estimated GW would make profits of up to £462m over seven years. Even the revised subsidy of £348m is scandalous considering British Rail's Great Western division was one of the world's most profitable long-distance rail services not many years ago.

Two big questions hang over GW after Southall: did the company allow trains in service with broken automatic warning system (AWS) and no back-ups like a second driver? And why was the automatic train protection (ATP), installed as a pilot project, not working? The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) must not prejudice the inquiry but took the unprecedented step after the crash of warning train operators not to take liberties with the AWS rules. The chief inspector of railways has stated: "I no longer consider the ATP schemes on Great Western and Chiltern Railways to be pilot trials. They have been in place for seven years and... should have been brought into full service and maintained in a proper way."

'Dr B. Ching'

LUVVIES

"Beyond its entertainment value, 'Baywatch' has enriched and, in many cases, helped save lives. I'm looking forward to the opportunity to continue with a project which has had such significance for so many."

DAVID HASSELHOFF
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Submitted by W. Randy Hoffman.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession.

Rotten Boroughs

Westminster

JOHN MAGILL, the district auditor whose report on gerrymandering has been vindicated in the high court, will now turn to other Westminster scandals.

At the height of the homes-for-votes scandal the Tories were so desperate to flog flats to potential voters that — via the taxpayer — they paid £30m for rewiring, painting and decorating, damp proofing and so on at the properties. When the gerrymandering scandal erupted years later, they then cynically asked the same tenants if they wouldn't mind coughing up. Not surprisingly they were told to Porter off.

But councillors have now been advised by officers that someone must pay £15m towards these repairs, and they must decide whom: either families who bought before 1987, charging the millions to the repair budget; or those who bought after 1987, the money being charged to the longterm improvements budget.

Meanwhile auditors will also be calculating how much was lost to taxpayers by moving tenants into two asbestos-ridden (and now demolished) tower blocks and then moving them out again. Latest estimates are £3m — and all to doctor voters in tight wards.

Magill will look too at allegations that the council only made environmental improvements in marginal wards where streets got colourful hanging baskets containing geraniums which last longer than flowers in safe seats. Public buildings in marginal wards were renovated with ramps for wheelchairs, it seems, while other areas were unchanged; some streets had three rubbish collections a week, while some Labour streets were lucky to get one.

There will also be an inquiry into allegations that officers moved working class folk out of Tory seats into rough overspill estates beyond the city's boundaries where they no longer had a Westminster vote. But potentially the most damaging investigation concerns the unitary development plan, which outlines how many new houses, roads, schools, playing fields and so on a council intends to build.

The Tories, under Lady Tesco in the 1980s, doctored theirs to allow developer chums to build luxury flats in listed buildings rather than affordable housing for the working class. By coincidence the chair of planning at the time was David Weekes — Shirley's fellow surchargee.

Cock-up of the week

HOUNSLOW's £1m new layout for its high street is so efficient the buses it was designed to help cannot use it.

The vehicles are meant to run through chicanes, but drivers face a host of problems: the front of buses come on to the pavement endangering pedestrians; the kerb is too high at stops; if two buses pull up together, newly-planted trees prevent passengers alighting; it's near impossible to prevent the tops of buses hitting shelters, etc. Bus companies refuse to use the high street until the council spends almost as much again sorting out the mess.

South Hereford

CONFUSION in South Herefordshire, where the council has not paid solicitor David Barry £100,000 for work he has done since 1992 in a complex legal wrangle over management of a sports centre on council-owned land at Ross-on-Wye.

When the sports centre association appointed Mr Barry to defend it, he was assured that "the council agreed to underwrite the necessary costs to enable the high court proceedings to be brought". Unbeknown to Mr Barry, the district auditor was worried about the legality of the council funding an action on behalf of an outside body.

Last year the high court resolved in the sports association's favour. But Mr Barry is still owed his £100,000 and has had to put his house on the market.

A spokesman for South Herefordshire told the *Eye*: "The council would like to pay Mr Barry and believed it had the legal power to do so, but the district auditor has taken a contrary view." Why, if the auditor was worried about the arrangement in December 1993, did the council allow it to go ahead?

Junkets of the Week

COVENTRY citizens shocked by news of the £3.5m fraud in the council's contract services department were delighted that the council could find £70,000 to have the supersonic Thrust car in the city for a two-day civic reception.

The event was masterminded by deputy council leader Arthur Waugh, who pushed budget approval through a sub-committee to give officers carte blanche to get the car at almost any price.

Deaf to protests that the reception shouldn't include food for 400 at a cost of £14,000, Waugh crowed that "this is a unique opportunity for the public to get close to the fastest car on earth". Shame at that price it was only on show for a day. Council tenants denied housing repairs probably wondered what the local connection was. (A few bits of the vroom-vroom were made in Coventry — and scores of other places).

In Berkshire, meanwhile, where junkets a-plenty are planned to mark the county council's abolition, ruling Lib Dems have commissioned a local author to write a book about the history of the Liberal Democrat Party in Berkshire. They tried to pay the author an advance out of council funds until they were rumbled.

Happily, the auditor has cleared everyone concerned. Which will be a relief to council leader Bob Mowat, whose expenses may leave Berkshire bankrupt. Last year he claimed nearly £20,000 — £217 for a three-day bar bill at Eastbourne's Grand Hotel. Eastbourne is not in Berkshire.

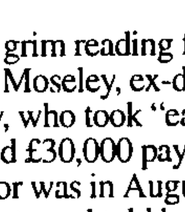
Hackney

HACKNEY council failed in its duty to children in its care and its social services department is incompetent, says the long-awaited Barrett report on Mark Trotter, the social worker who died of AIDS in 1995 after allegedly buggering children in the council homes where he worked.

As the *Eye* can now reveal, in a fit of PC pique in the early 80s Hackney stopped automatic police checks on new employees who would be working with vulnerable children. The checks were considered homophobic and the police seen as lackeys of the Tory junta. It was after this Trotter was taken on. Checks were reintroduced when the Trotter affair broke.

The report makes grim reading for those who ran social services: Joyce Moseley, ex-director, and her deputy Dynah Morley, who took "early retirement" in 1996 with £70,000 and £30,000 pay-offs respectively. Moseley's biggest error was in August 1995 when Merseyside police wrote and told her they wanted to question Trotter about allegations of sexual abuse in Liverpool. The letter arrived a month after he had died and Moseley ignored it — even though Hackney had itself investigated Trotter over similar allegations. Only after a number of papers, including *Private Eye*, revealed details of the sordid story did Hackney admit blame, instigate an inquiry and try to contact those children Trotter may have infected.

But, as Barrett reports, even this was botched. Morley was put in charge of the inquiry and she chose Len Redley, a senior social services manager who was himself being investigated by the council for non-related misdemeanours, to run it. Amazingly after several months' "working" on the report Redley disappeared. When Morley tracked him down his "report" consisted of six handwritten pages, one of which was missing.



Murkeyside

LIVERPOOL city council leader Frank Prendergast has apologised to Lib Dem councillor Flo Clucas and paid her legal costs after wrongly branding her a liar during a radio debate.

Prendergast has also seen Coun Joe Kenny defect from Labour, with two more rumoured ready to leave. Kenny complained about those who "continue to practise intimidating and bullying policies of previous Labour Militant administrations" and likened the Prendergast regime to that of a "despotic dictator". The defection and a shock by-election loss have robbed the party of overall control of the council.

DOWN ON THE FARM

AT least there was good news at the recent British Crop Protection Conference, the annual belly-up of the pesticide people.

With the organic lobby winning the debate hands down on the future of agriculture, the agrochem-boys have been increasingly desperate to justify their toxic products. So they were delighted to learn that intensive farming and pesticide use is actually good for the global environment.

This wonderful news was brought by Dennis Avery, director of Global Food Issues at the influential Hudson Institute, a rightwing American think thank. Avery, who set up the centre to "provide the public with facts regarding high-yield farming", argues that intensive farming is more productive than low-input farming so it will use less land to feed everyone. This means the world's wild areas, such as forest and natural grassland, will be safe from the need to plough them up for food.

There is just one tiny flaw in this plan: and that is that it is bollocks. But perhaps we should not be too surprised about the claims US lobbyists will make in defence of their interests. During the Kyoto summit on climate change, for example, they came up with the powerful argument that any measures to combat global warming would damage "the American way of life" — apparently without any ironic intent.

Avery's bizarre views should have provided a good laugh, too. But to the ears of arable farmers this is music — they are desperate not to give up their sprays. This is not only a matter of profit. Big farming is an addictive game based on hunky machinery, an array of powerful weapons and an annual prize largely dependent on your own skill. Of course they could get the same buzz from the challenge within any given set of rules, but they don't know that. They are still fixated on big yields above all else, even when the cost of production is, on most farms, higher than the price.

It also fits in with their own take on reality. That our farmers help to alleviate hunger is an essential part of the mythology. Not for them the tedious and complex details that there is no "world shortage" of food; that people go hungry because they are poor, and that agriculture is not a food-maximising system at all any more than the motor industry is car-maximising. It is much nicer to think of it as a technical problem because that justifies the drive for yield at any cost.

As for wildlife, the fact that world markets have been awash with cheap grain for decades has not prevented wholesale loss of habitat. To claim that bulging US grain stores will protect the Amazon basin or the African savannah is hogwash. But the British agribusiness chap, who thinks nature conservation is the row of poplars down the farm drive, will happily swallow that as well. Used as he is to the diet of tripe in his weekly trade press reading, it takes a good deal to make him gag. Whether anyone outside farming will be convinced is another matter.

'Gumboot'

"I'm calling to protest about the most appalling blot on the landscape"

Letters

A Christmas issue

Sir,

I received the EYE *in the post this morning, and I am filled with disgust at the front cover. (Haven't looked inside yet.) All I can say is you must have no feelings or values whatsoever.*

The man featured has just lost his son, for God's sake. Therefore I would be most appreciative if you would please return the remainder of my subscription. Enough is enough. The derision of the passing of Diana and Dodi Fayed has been given a good run, and I'm sure like me most readers are more than a little sickened by your sick humour.

Yours,
(MRS) DOROTHY WATSON,

Gateshead, Tyne & Wear.

Shining example

Sir,

I think I can affirm that most of the environmental and cultural pollution is caused by bad habits and stupid traditions.

Now it seems clear to me that you at PRIVATE EYE *contribute to reinforce this behaviour by sending every Christmas your information in a unecological, sickening, shiny-coloured cover which, considering the fact that you play the lie detector during the rest of the time, makes the summit of mass-mindless consumption even more sadly disgusting than it already is. It is probably the moment to grow up and become ecological and reasonable all the year long.*

Enjoy the crap Christmas and the next tragic year.

ADAM PESCIA,

Sale, Cheshire.

Frankly appalling

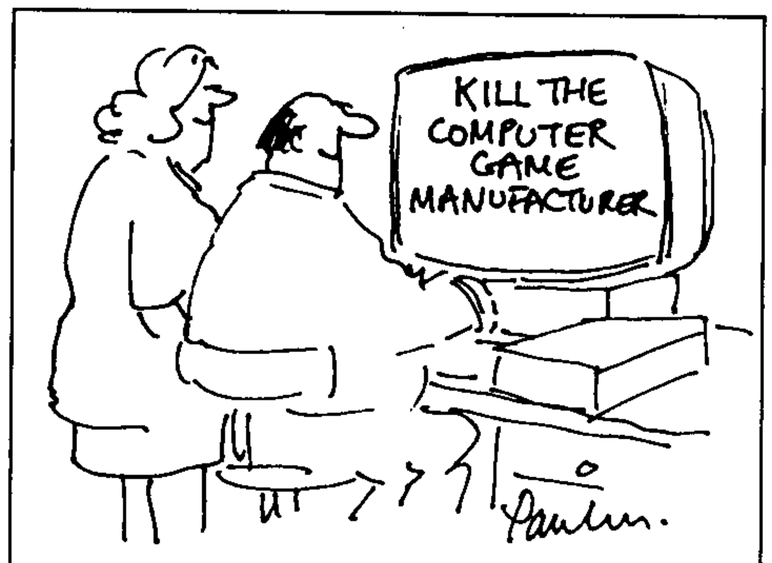
Sir,

You have slurred the good name of RDF television and I demand an apology.

It is true that we produced the controversial Channel 4 series AGAINST NATURE *which has upset many Greens (*EYE *939). It is also true that we have contributed weightier items such as* STRIPPAGRAN *and* SUPERDICK *to the world of television. But, unforgivably, you failed to mention our proudest achievements, namely,* COPING WITH LARGE BREASTS, MISSIONARY IN POSITION, MR BEN DOVER *and* THE WELL HUNG JURY *(some European rights still available).*

Yours faithfully,
DAVID FRANK,

***RDF television**, London SW6.*



New game for parents

Food for thought

Sir,

Re: Andrew Bluhm's letter in 940. The "First Supper" cartoon on the letters page of issue 939, far from being distasteful, portrays the Christmas message of God becoming a man, and of that man's journey to the cross, better than any sermon I have ever heard (and somewhat more succinctly as well!)

Yours festively,
ANDY RUSSELL,

Deal, Kent.

Card sharp

Sir,

On hearing of the leaked letter concerning substantial cuts in disability benefit allowances, I threw my Labour Party membership card into the fire. It was about 11.30pm on Friday 12 December.

At 7.15am on Saturday 13 a letter arrived through the post. It was a new Labour party card with a letter from that nice Mr Blair.

I'd heard that Mr Mandelson had his finger on the pulse, but this is amazing!

Yours in fear,
MARK SLATER,

St Neots, Cambs.

Preacherman

Sir,

Re: Jeremy Paxman's musical "knowledge". His Varese/Stravinsky gaffe couldn't have been more excruciating than his refusal to award points to the UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE *team who identified the Manic Street Preachers' missing guitarist as Richey Edwards instead of, as Paxo insisted, Richey James.*

As every fan of the magnificent Manics could have told him, Richey Edwards and Richey James are one and the same person.

Still, never mind, the Pax is so brilliant on NEWSNIGHT *that a spot of the Ozymandiases during the course of* UNI CHALLENGE *isn't likely to do him much harm.*

Yours faithfully,
C. McCORMACK,

Wilmslow.

Loss leader

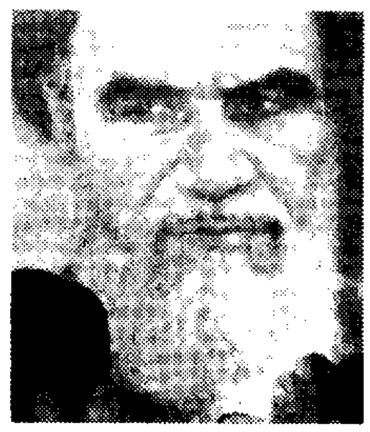
Sir,

In the issue of 26 December 1997 you accuse me of brown-nosing Andrew Neil so I can get a job on the new SUNDAY BUSINESS. *This is an unlikely prospect, as during my brief spell as editor of the paper last year I was widely (and rightly) credited with taking it down-market, and soon after, down the pan. In any case, I only lost the previous owners £2,762,189. I understand the Barclay brothers are hoping to lose at least £12m, which is way beyond my capabilities.*

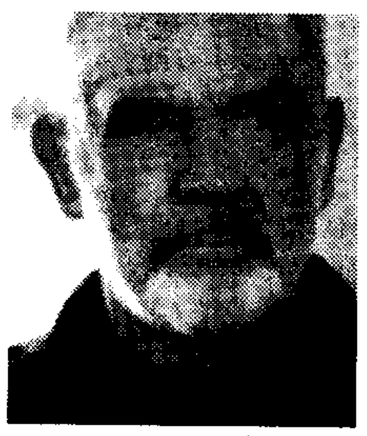
Yours sincerely,
ANIL BHOYRUL,

Editor, Business Age.

Lookalike



Connery



Ayatollah

Sir,

No doubt thousands of people will send you this from THE SUNDAY INDEPENDENT. *Is Sean Connery going to play the Ayatollah Khomeini in his next film — doesn't need any make up at all!*

Best regards,
LINDA McDONALD,

Hampton, Middlesex.

Debt collector

Sir,

Thanks for the second round of publicity regarding Alexandra Palace and for the second opportunity to put the record straight.

On the architectural value/worth of the building, one of our leading international architects said to me that it was a building with no architectural merits at all. English Heritage, an unelected quango accountable to itself, chose to list it. The only elements worthy of consideration are the Organ, the Theatre (which may be damaged beyond repair) and Logie Baird's studio (though the BBC thinks it has little merit).

On the £100,000 spent on our millennium bid, we raised over £75m of matching funds for a Superhighways Centre that was to link all our secondary schools. This is now the National Grid for Learning and sits comfortably at the Dept for Education and Employment (DfEE). Pity the millennium commissioners didn't understand our bid because it could have been centred at the palace.

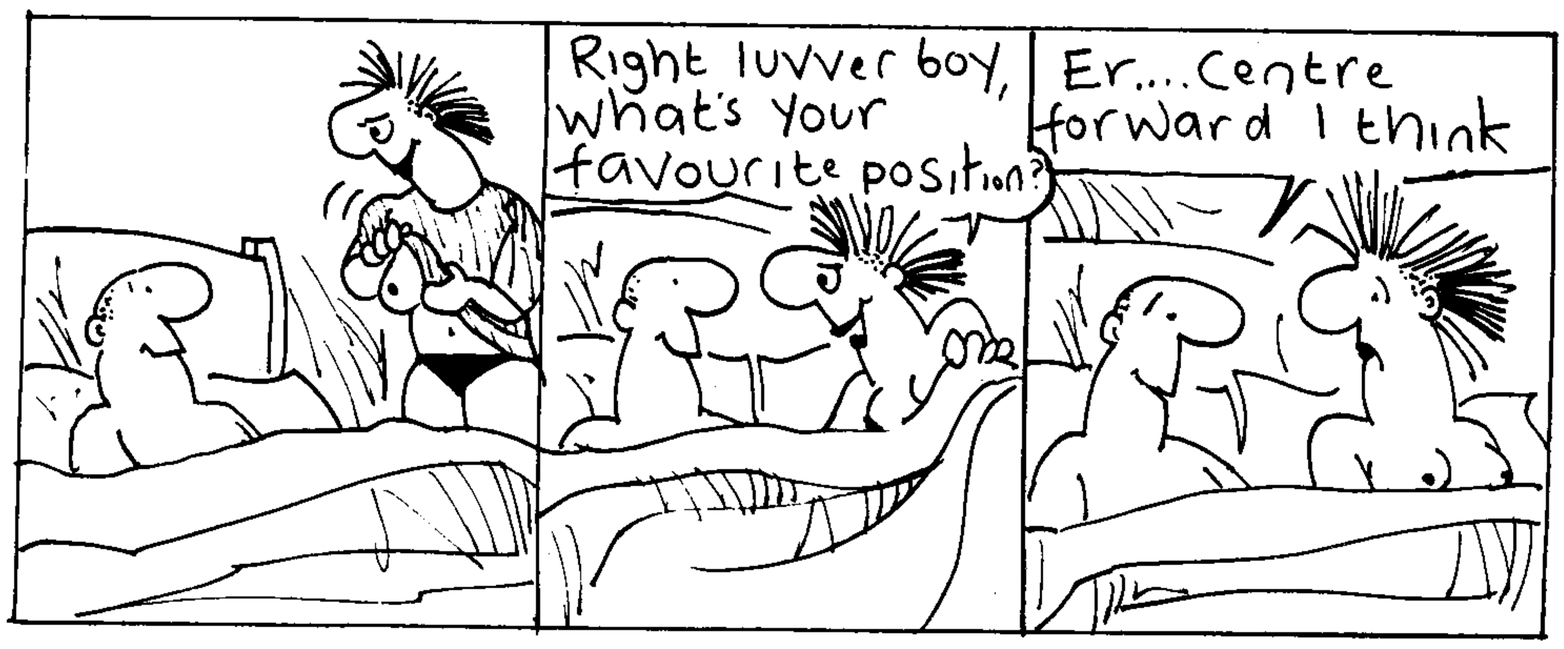
On the French trip, again it cost about £1,000, we were in discussion for an inward investment of between £10-£15m. The palace had been a race track in the 1940s, 50s and 60s, and the offer to create a new racing venture, albeit trotting, had to be taken seriously. Once we had met the investors, seen their plans and realised the impact such a track would have, we declined it.

I resigned as chair and as a local councillor because I could not give the time necessary to secure a viable future for the palace as I had been elected to stand in the apparently hopeless seat of Sittingbourne and Sheppey, which I duly won.

It suits the two main protagonists to link my name to the £55m debt because it gives them the badly needed publicity they require to stack up a case against the local council and the district auditor. I inherited this debt, all I tried to do was to find a solution.

Yours etc,
DEREK WYATT MP,

House of Commons.



I-SPY *Plymouth, Maryland, USA*

Submitted by Philip James. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Imp perfections

Sir,

I write not so much in response to but in observation on your article in the PRIVATE EYE *edition 939 dated 12 December 1997 and headed "TEC Mates". No doubt most of your readers accept your publication as an attempt at humour. I certainly hope they'll read the article in such light as if it is an attempt at serious journalism it is laughable, even puerile.*

You suggest a situation in such a way as to portray some sort of clandestine and underhand secret society designed solely for the benefit of the TEC directors. This seems at odds with the very fact that the source from which the information is derived is a publicly available document, published and promoted as such. Actually if you'd followed up your research a little better, you'd find you'd got some figures wrong (but I won't be churlish) and missed a few opportunities for more silly little digs. There are other directors (and TEC staff) who sit on external bodies as directors. They are all listed and publicly declared — anyone is welcome to a full list. Moreover, in any case in which there could be any likelihood of an interest conflict these are also defined, listed and publicly available. Anyone, even mischievous little imps like you, is entitled to see it.

You will note that TEC directors are not paid. I am not paid by any organisation other than West Wales TEC. None of the TEC's directors are paid as directors of any of the external organisations on which they sit in such capacity. So what exactly is your point?

Your arguments are nebulous. Such as they may be discerned they are invalid. And, by the way, I suspect your observations would apply to every TEC in the UK.

Anyway, enough from me. Any more and I give too great a credence and validity to an article worthy of none.

Happy Christmas,

Yours sincerely,

CHRIS JONES,
Chief Executive, West Wales TEC.

Hit man

Sir,

Recent reports about Tony Blair's Rottweiler, Alistair "school bully" Campbell (calling foreign journalists cunts, etc) remind me of the time I met him at a small dinner party. Only days before we met, Campbell had punched a journalist from THE GUARDIAN *who'd expressed jubilation at the news of the death of the bouncing Czech, Robert Maxwell. Campbell was then working on* THE MIRROR.

I asked Campbell why he'd so violently defended a man who was known across the world as a complete bastard. Campbell glared at me and said "You're cruising for a bruising". Apart from wondering about the embarrassing cliché, I was astonished at the anger in his voice. I was also rather cross at the implied threat (that he would hit me too) and on the assumption that it is best to meet these things head on (aren't all bullies cowards really?) I thought I would provoke him a little further, so I continued, in the mildest possible tone, "I suppose you had to defend him as you worked so closely with him for so long". At this point Campbell seemed on the verge of apoplexy so I quickly said: "The trouble with hitting people is that sometimes they hit back." Luckily for me that seemed to do the trick and he subsided into his chair and didn't speak another word to me.

Yours etc,
TOM QUINN,

Editor, The Countryman.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"It could be bad news for Andy Sinton. His knee is locked up in the dressing room."
GEORGE GAVIN, Sky Sports
(L. Ebenezer)

"The gelling period has just started to knit."
RAY WILKINS, ITV
(Robin Stieber)

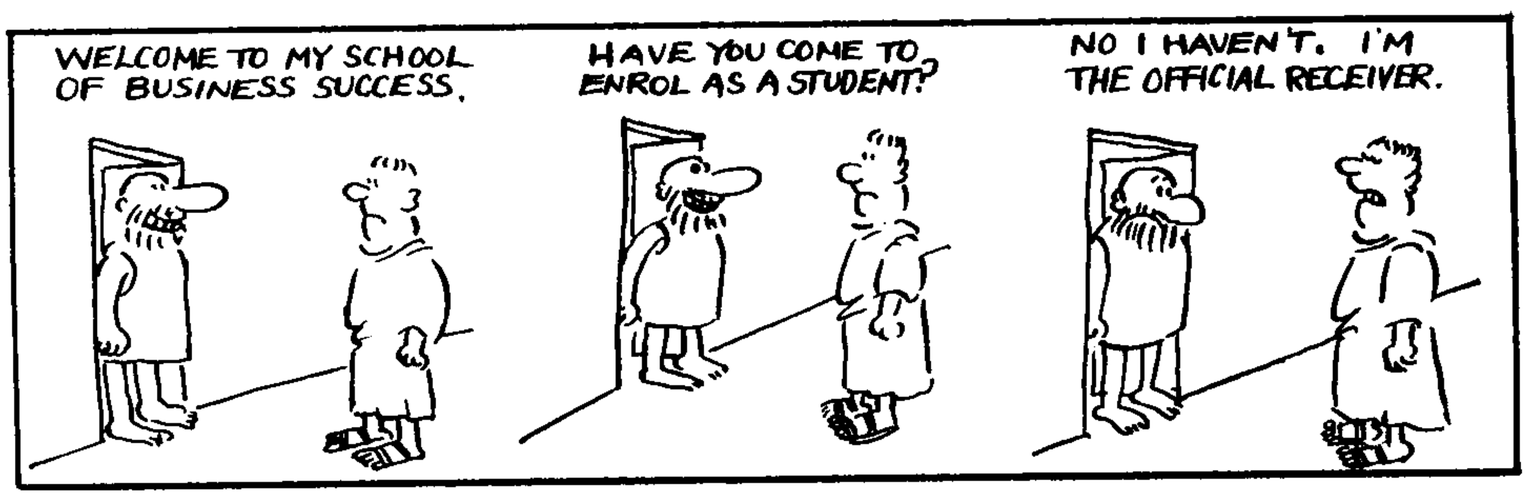
Presenter: *What has been the reaction to this new ban?*
Smithfield Spokesperson: *It hasn't caused a problem at all. As soon as our traders opened for business this morning, the customers bought all the oxtail we had. They went mad...*
GLR at Smithfield Meat Market
(Jeremy Silverstone)

"That was in the '70s and '80s, but now we're in the '90s and nearly the '20s."
TONY GREEN, BBC1
(Phil Shemmings)

"A Cabinet Minister's son has been arrested for selling drugs... The Prime Minister is being kept up to speed with developments."
Newscaster, Radio Ulster
(Colin McAuley)

HOM SAP

BY DAVID AUSTIN



SERBS YOU RIGHT: LETTER FROM THE BBC

The BBC has a new governor — Dame Pauline Neville-Jones, described in a brief announcement from the corporation as "managing director of NatWest Markets and a former political director and deputy under-secretary of state at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office".

The BBC's resumé neglects to add that Dame Pauline was closely involved in two of the bigger scandals of the Major years. It was she who prepared John Major's evidence to the arms-to-Iraq inquiry, seeking to persuade Lord Justice Scott that the PM was a blameless buffoon who knew nothing about anything. (A surprisingly easy task, as it turned out.) And it was she who led the British delegation at the Balkan peace talks in Dayton, Ohio, where she put strong pressure on the Bosnians to accept the de facto partition of their country and lobbied energetically for an end to sanctions against Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic.

By the time of the Dayton agreement, at the end of 1995, Neville-Jones's old boss Douglas Hurd had resigned as foreign secretary and taken up a part-time job as deputy chairman of NatWest Markets, on a salary of £250,000. In 1996 Neville-Jones joined him there as managing director, whereupon the gruesome twosome jetted off to Belgrade to cash in on the abolition of sanctions.

At a "working breakfast" with President Milosevic, they concluded a lucrative deal whereby NatWest Markets would privatise Serbia's post and telephone services for a fee of about $10m. For a further large fee, it would manage the country's national debt.

Hurd and Neville-Jones have always insisted there is no connection of any kind between their previous jobs as globe-trotting appeasers of Milosevic and their subsequent careers as globe-trotting bankers to Milosevic. "There have been insinuations," Hurd wrote to the *Daily Mail* last year, "that the government's policy towards Bosnia while I was foreign secretary and Pauline Neville-Jones was political director was in some way connected with our later positions with NatWest Markets. This is nonsense... Pauline Neville-Jones was in touch with NatWest Markets during 1995 about the possibility of going to the bank but did not join until July 1996."

Allow that to sink in. The Dayton agreement was signed in December 1995 — when, Hurd admits, she was already negotiating a job with NatWest. A mere seven months later, having played such an important part in ending Milosevic's financial isolation, she was in Belgrade on behalf of the bank for a "pro-forma client meeting".

Does any of this qualify Dame Pauline to be a governor of the BBC? Having spent most of her life in Whitehall, she certainly has little experience of broadcasting and looked very ill-at-ease during her television debut on *Question Time* in November 1996. "Do you agree," a member of the audience asked, "that peace can only be achieved in Northern Ireland by unconditional negotiations?"

"I must say," she replied, "that I agree with those who say that you can't have a party at a negotiation who is negotiating out of the barrel of a gun. They can't come to the table on that basis... What we want is proof of good behaviour." David Dimbleby then pointed out that she hadn't applied this principle to her pal Milosevic, who was permitted to "come to the table" in Dayton even though he hadn't accepted a ceasefire at the time. "It's quite true that the formal ceasefire came afterwards," she conceded lamely. "I think, however, that in some ways that's a slightly different situation..." So it was — not least because Milosevic had been responsible for many, many more deaths than the Provisional IRA.

Still, she must have impressed someone in the BBC. According to the official announcement posted on a noticeboard at Broadcasting House, Dame Pauline will have "special responsibility for the BBC World Service, and for chairing the Governors' World Service Consultative Group" — to which a disgruntled hack has added the words "...where she will continue to represent Serbian interests".

What a disgraceful accusation. Pauline Neville-Jones is a distinguished public servant who will bring to her job all the integrity and objectivity one would expect from a former intelligence boss who later formed a business partnership with a corrupt, genocidal thug.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

"It's a happening idea. I'm convinced that events like these could give the tourist industry a major boost," Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik, Malaysia's Arts and Tourism Minister, told participants gathered for a mass circumcision ceremony in Kuala Lumpur. "Furthermore, by charging tourists a small fee to watch, say RM4 or RM5, the organisational costs of the whole event could easily be covered. It is far out."

Asked why he thought tourists would want to watch such a ceremony, he replied: "Why wouldn't they want to see something that is different from the norm? Circumcision is cool. It is part of our cultural heritage, and we should be proud for the world to watch as our boys are initiated into the Muslim religion. But I caution the organisers of such events to plan well because, if a ceremony is planned for a certain day and tickets have been sold, then the circumcisions must go ahead, even if it rains or the boys are ill. After all, we should not deny tourists their ceremony, especially since they have paid to be part of the festivity." *(Malay Sunday Star, 7/12/97. Spotter: W. L. Addington)*

—o—

"YOU WILL PAY ATTENTION!! Doctor Ngunga is here to solve all your economic as well as social problems. He can also tell you all your problems before you say anything to him. He can treat (heal) more than 48 diseases at a reasonable price. Consultation fee is R20.00 only. Examples of diseases/problems are listed below.

"1) Insanity 2) diarrhoea 3) bewitched people 4) one with bad luck 5) men's penis which cannot erect powerfully 6) women with pregnancy problems 7) vomiting all the time 8) asthma 9) woman who cannot produce 10) gonorrhoea 11) lack of strength in the body 12) to be liked at work 13) bad smelling breath and also prevent thieves from attacking homes, shops and cars 14) education 15) promotion 16) pressure 17) diabetes 18) customers attraction 19) court cases 20) tuberculosis 21) demand debts 22) removal of misunderstandings with anybody 23) to make lover scream out more 24) cancer 25) sore lips 26) swollen body 27) Athlete's foot etc.

"Don't hesitate to pay him a visit. You are most welcome. The doctor is currently available at: Ernest Gebou Building Site, Caravan no.16, next to Morgan Street Barker & Deli, Near First National Bank." *(Doctor's brochure, Tzaneen [South Africa] 1997. Spotter: Anon)*

—o—

"I am so emotional. This is the greatest day in aviation history," Sayed Abdel Rahman Hassan Shoaib told a press conference, immediately after registering the patent for his latest invention in Cairo's Scientific Research and Technology Academy. "From now on, I can guarantee that mid-air explosions will be a thing of the past.

"You see," he continued, "jet engines usually explode in mid-air five seconds after they ignite. But with my system, all the pilot has to do is to push a button in the cockpit, and the aircraft's wing will automatically dismantle, taking the

blazing engine and the fuel tank with it. It is simplicity itself."

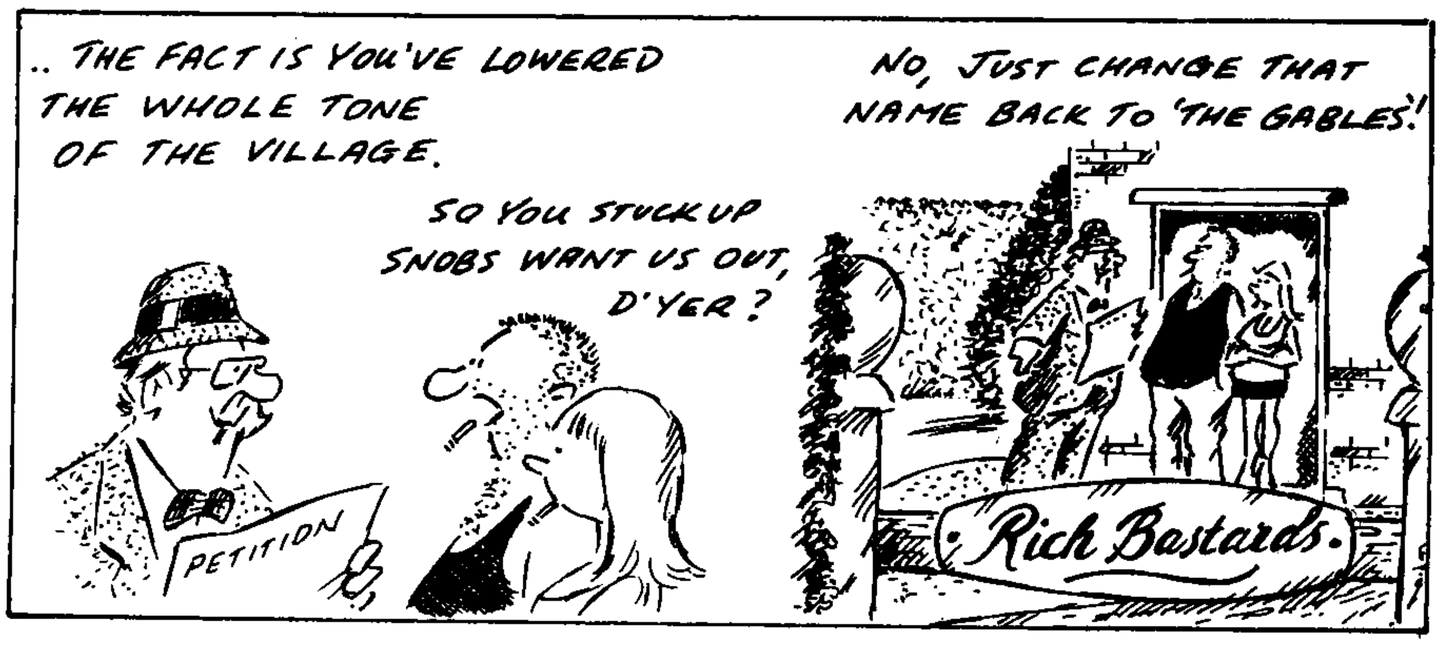
Asked to explain what would then prevent the plane from crashing, he paused before replying that: "Another wing will automatically appear, turning the plane into a gliding aircraft. And great big red balloons will appear at the back of the plane to reduce its speed."

Amid growing protests from aviation engineers, he added: "Furthermore, once the plane has slowed to 400km per hour, which is the usual speed of a helicopter, rotoring blades will unfurl on the two wings to turn the plane into a helicopter boat, enabling the pilot to steer and make a safe landing, even at sea." His subsequent remarks were drowned out by angry protests, and the press conference ended in chaos. (Egyptian Gazette 3/11/97. Spotter: Andrew Sharp)

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

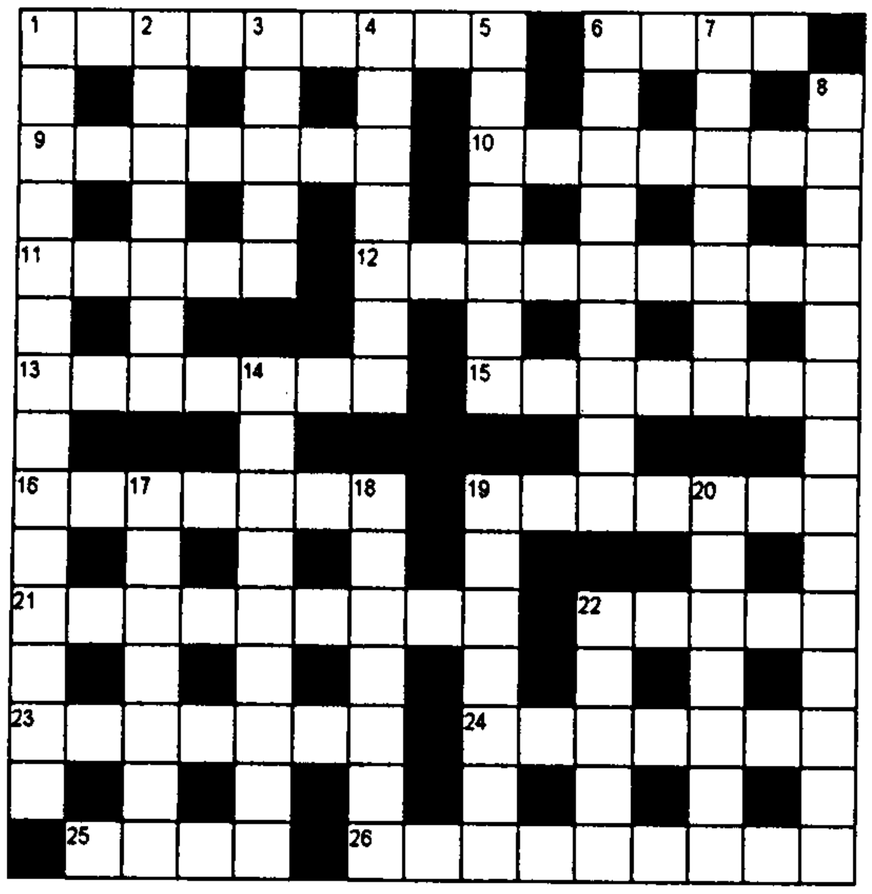
The Lottery Winners

TURNER


.. THE FACT IS YOU'VE LOWERED THE WHOLE TONE OF THE VILLAGE.
SO YOU STUCK UP SNOBS WANT US OUT, D'YER?
NO, JUST CHANGE THAT NAME BACK TO 'THE GABLES'!
PETITION
Rich Bastards.

EYE CROSSWORD 96

by Cyclops *£100 prize*



ACROSS

1 Miss, not impotence, but spicy females sticking their tongues out and flashing their knickers? (4,5)
6 Diarrhoea, no beginning, no end — give up! (4)
9 It's not country folk have to get into trusses (7)
10 Quite able to hold one's chopper (7)
11 Those who've been honoured to take 'E'— like the Teletubbies? (5)
12 Suspect picture gives one impression one has necessary tackle (9)
13 Tobacco promoter's car sporting event, we hear (7)
15 Drunkards grabbing Prince's Mates (7)
16 Avoids leaks? (7)
19 Opera house Teletubbie endlessly snorting speed and cocaine (2,5)
21 Oust the government? That's a load of balls, chuck (9)
22 Our familiar Charles with his ma behind bush (5)
23 Measure energy consumed by tart when about to solicit (7)
24 Oxygen administered before a wank I contrived off the coast of Japan (7)
25 Scumbag's way to success (4)
26 (see 3)

DOWN

1 Straddle Roger? (3,4,3,4)
2 Read law, distributed rough justice (3,4)
3/26/6dn Only one session now for these parliamentary posers (5,9,9)
4 Who tried to stop sales *of Private Eye* with HM's connivance? (1,1,5)
5 Topless Sport on Sunday, can make you bow-legged (7)
6 (see 3)
7 So, Kevin trashed petitions (7)
8 Virgin rival undoes bra this way, Iris (7,7)
14 One who's actually managed to get a hospital bed? Trendy, cool! (2-7)
17 A fast mover and not the faithful type by the sound of it (7)
18 Nut case foreign court into S and M (7)
19 Mean dope (3-4)
20 Cause a stir, calling for one stupid bastard to get stuffed (7)
22 Second-grade flipping prison, as foreigners call us (5)

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 16.01.98. Entries to "Crossword", Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 95

Winner: MARY SIMPSON

ACROSS: 7 Expel 8 Hardcore 10 Boadicea 11 Tomcat 12/9/17/21 Christmas Comes But Once A Year 14 Semi 15 Oral sex 17 (see 12) 20 Abba 22 Power base 24 Tweeds 26 Steroids 27 Exercise 28 E-type.

DOWN: 1 Heroic 2 Epidural 3 Black sheep 4 The Army 5 Prat 6 Orgasmic 9 (see 12) 13 Square Eyes 16 Ruby Wax 18 Oratory 19 Twister 21 (see 12) 23 Eddies 25 Snip.

The Alternative Rocky Horror Service Book

No. 94: Service to be performed by the Archbishop of Canterbury in Asda over the period of Christmas and the Epiphany.

Carey: O Lord, open thou our doors.

All: And our mouths shall start watering with all the delicious things on display.

Carey: The first shall be last and the last first.

All: Not in here, mate. Out the way. That's my trolley.

The Address

Carey: I welcome you all here to Asda — and did not the three wise men see "A Sda" shining in the East? *(Here the congregation may laugh or not).* Today is a very important one for us all here. I bring good news and glad tidings of great joy. There are seasonal offers on all the following items:

The Reading

Carey: Low Fat Shepherd's Pie: Was £1.30: Now £1.29. Angel Delight, banana flavour: Was £59p: Now £58p. Packet of 200 Camel Cigarettes: Was £29.99: Now £30.00

The Blessing

Carey: Frozen Peas be with you.

All: And with thy spirits and alcoholic beverages — particularly the Drambuie which is 6p off. *(The choir and congregation will now sing "The Trolley and the Ivy" (Trad) or similar piece of seasonal muzak)*

Carey: Let us pay. *(The congregation shall now process to the checkout points excepting those with "8 sins or less" who may go directly to a special till where they shall be ministered unto by Sheryl and Dean — or it may be Dawn and Darren)*

All: The Lord be with you.

Carey: And Wayne also if you require assistance bagging up your purchases.

All: Asdamen.

© Carey Productions for Asda Plc

MICKEY SAYS NO TO MANDY MEETING

by Our Man in Florida
Lunchtime O'Rlando

MR Michael Mouse, the well-known Disney spokesman, yesterday created a storm when he refused to be photographed shaking hands with the cartoon character Mandy Mandelson.

"I am a serious figure," said Mr Mouse, "and I cannot afford to ruin my reputation by association with an internationally recognised joke figure."

Mr Mouse continued: "Mandy has a silly voice and funny ears and you won't catch me making a fool of myself with him for the cameras".

Humphrey the cat is 79.

The meeting between Gerry Adams, President of Sinn Fein, the military wing of the I.R.A., and British Prime Minister Tony Blair was **the first time an Irish republican leader had been welcomed to 10 Downing St.**

Time Magazine

A Day Out For All The Family!

Yes, it's Britain's newest Leisure Experience!
Earl Spencer proudly invites you to

Just off the M1!

ALTONTHORP TOWERS

(Formerly All-Thorpe Park)

It's Di-snleyland in Northants!
Just jump on a Virgin train or, if you actually want to get there, go in your car!
For just £9.99 you will have the experience of a lifetime.

WHAT YOU WILL SEE

● Video of Earl Spencer making historic funeral oration in Westminster Abbey.

● **Diana's Hall of Love. Lifelike waxworks of the late Princess of Wales and her legion of male admirers, including Capt Hewitt, James Gilbey, Will Carling and Clive James. (Warning: waxworks supplied by Madame Tussaud and may look like England World Cup Team 1966)**

● *Special interactive video game — Windsor Terminator — in which you get to "blow away" all the Royals who treated Diana so badly.*

● ***Pay a visit to the counselling tent where highly skilled therapists will help you come to terms with the stress of losing Diana, the Late Princess of Wales.***

● Work out in a lifelike replica of the Harbour Club gym and try to dodge the paparazzi as you leave! (Souvenir photographs of yourself at only £50 a time.)

● **Go shopping in the official souvenir shops which sell only authentic tasteful souvenirs personally approved by Earl Spencer and his chief artistic adviser Sir Darius de Guppy F.R.A.U.D.**

● *Eat low-cal snacks at the Princess Di-et Cafe with international cuisine provided by TV's Two Thin Ladies.* (Surely some mistake? Ed.)

Book your tickets now — don't be disappointed!

Di's Я Us™

™A registered trade mark of Spencer Leisure Promotions of Cape Town, SA

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

Well, it's good to be back! And it seems Cherie and I chose just the right moment to pop off for our little winter break in the sunny Seychelles!

We're not going to bore you all with our holiday snaps because we thought it would be insensitive to take any! No-one wants to see us having a good time on the beach while the rest of you have been coping with the gales!

Our sympathy goes out to all those parishioners who have lost their homes in the storms or had them washed away by mountainous seas and you can rest assured that we were thinking of you all when we were swimming in the Indian Ocean! I am sure that in the new spirit of St Albion's we have got beyond any envious sniping at people who are lucky enough to have well-earned holidays!

"A break is as good as a rest" *(Mark 10.4)*. And, with my batteries recharged, I now have the energy to get on with the very important task of cutting down all our wasteful church expenditure — particularly on the parish's poor and needy.

Let's not forget the story in the Bible where our Lord came face to face with a disabled person lying on the ground.

Did he give him a handout? Did he send him off to the Benefits Office to claim an allowance?

No. His message was clear, simple and clear.

"Take up your bed and work," he said *(New Labour Bible, Luke 13.12)*.

This is what I call "compassion with a hard edge", which in my book is what real compassion is all about *(Book of Common Blair)*.

It is not some airy-fairy, sentimental nonsense about feeling sorry for people! Look, let's remember what it says in the Old Testament — "The Lord helps those who help themselves" *(Book of Job Centre, 27.3)*.

By the way, this shows that not everything "old" is bad! Most things are, obviously, because new things are better.

But sometimes even old things can teach us something (though not in the case of Mr Jack Ashley — no disrespect intended!).

So, let's go forward into '98 with a new sense of purpose, thanking the Lord that we no longer live in the kind of society where men have to walk up and down the street in bowler hats.

Today we live in a new, exciting, vibrant country, that can produce great films like *The Full Monty,* which Cherie and I are very much hoping to see sometime very soon, as soon as we get a chance!

Your friend,

Tony

To Remember In Your Prayers

Mr and Mrs Straw and their son William, who cannot be named. They have had a very stressful time over the holiday period. We all know, as parents, how difficult it is to control youngsters these days! But, as Jack himself has always been first to point out, that doesn't mean there shouldn't be very heavy penalties for those parents who can't!

TB

A Special Message from Dr Mowlam, Co-ordinator of the St Albion's Mission To Ulster

● Contrary to what you may have heard, our inter-faith peace programme is very much up and running. Let's not get disheartened just because it looks as if there's no chance of it working. Everyone is welcome at the open meeting next week, where we can expect a full and frank exchange of gunfire.

(For understandable reasons, Dr Mowlam is under considerable strain at the moment. I am sure she means "views". I have therefore taken the liberty of cutting the rest of her contribution. Alistair Campbell, Editor)

A POSTCARD FROM THE CHURCHWARDEN

(to be read by everyone in the parish)

I am here in Disneyland getting ideas for what to put in the Millennium Tent. Not that I haven't got lots of ideas already, because I have, as I will be explaining to you all in due course.

The giant magnet is only one. But the Americans are better than anyone in the world at putting on a show, and they have already given me one very good idea, which is to have a huge parade of colourful characters, such as Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, etc. In my view this would be a perfect way to celebrate the year 2000. I am sure you will all agree. And if you don't, you soon will, And don't worry about whether the Tent celebrations will have a religious theme. They will. People of ***all*** *religions will be asked to join in and so will all those who do not like religion. It will be a spiritual and unifying event of the type shown on this card.*

Yours,

Mickey Mandelson

"Seek ye first the Magic Kingdom" (John, 7.13)

Next Year's Christmas Panto

There have already been a flood of applications to play the part of the **Lord Mayor of London** in the 1998 St Albion's pantomime. Our thanks to **Mr Archer, Mr Livingstone, Mr Patten, Mr Clark (!) and Miss Jackson (!!)**, but the vicar will decide himself who is to play this important part, after due consultation with the Churchwarden. ***TB***

"I don't know much about art, but I know what I'm supposed to like"

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Frank Muir, TV Panellist, Writer of *Take It From Here* and author of *The Frank Muir Book*

So. Farewell then
Frank Muir

With your white hair,
Pink bow tie and
Funny
Way of talking.

"Every one's a
Fruit and nut case."

That was your
Catchprase.

But now you have been
Taken From Here.

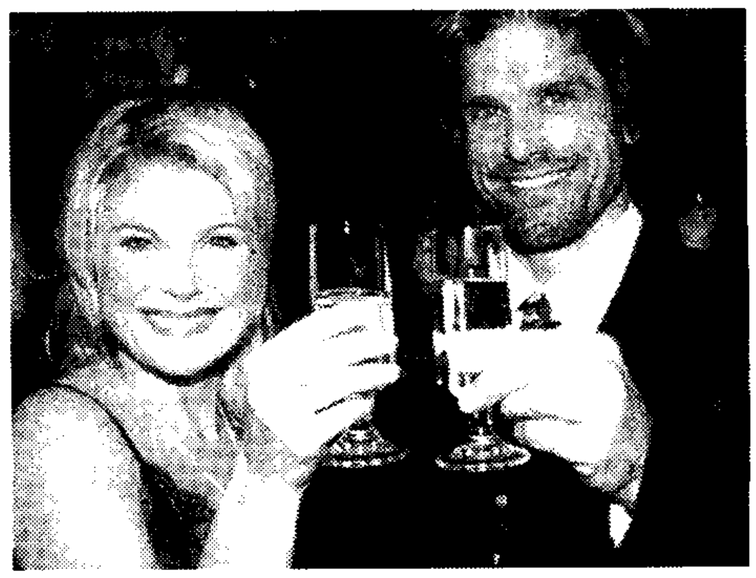
E.J. Thribb (17¾)

IP FRONTERS GOES TO DOWNING STREET!

It's the ultimate celebrity do — New Year at No. 10!

1 She's the **Cherie** on the cake! No wonder **Gerald** thinks he's a lucky **Kaufman**! As they say — **Blair** today, gone to the Opera House tomorrow! Still, what a great Labour Party! *(You're fired. Ed.)*

2 It's a Man Behaving Badly! That's a **Clune** as to who is kissing the mystery blonde! Got the answer yet? **Ulrika**! It's our **Martin** making Ms **Jonsson** see Shooting Stars! *(This is really feeble. You're rehired. Ed.)* Who cares? The main thing is that it's a great Labour Party!

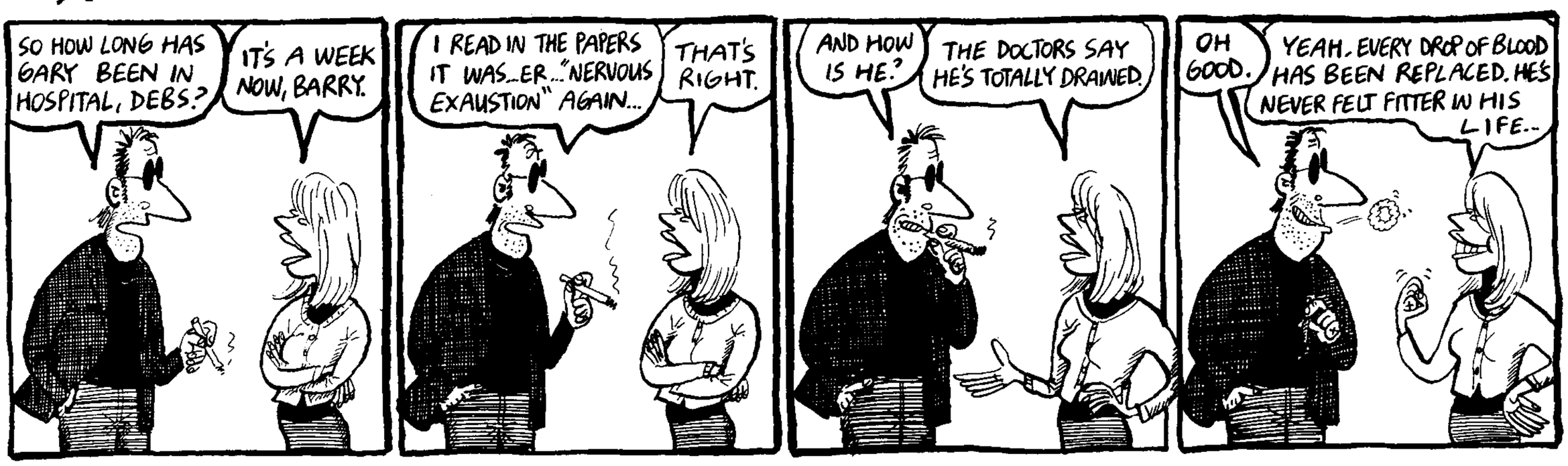


3 It's Virgin on the ridiculous! They've brought out the **Branson** again but **Richard**'s not complaining! Not when he's taking **Denise van Outen** herself! That's Big Breakfast of him! Hang on a minute — it might be **Jeremy Irons** and **Helen Mirren**! Or is it **Rory McGrath** with **Kirsty Young** from Channel Five News? Perhaps it's **Sean Bean** with **Zoe Ball**? Anyway, whoever they are, there's no denying that this is a great Labour Party! *(This is pathetic. You're fired. Ed.)*

4 United again! **David** is obviously at the lady's **Beckham** call! But she's no **Posh**-over and he'll have to make some Spice between the posts if he is to score! *(You're fired again — and don't use the Labour Party joke to finish. Ed.)* Happy New Year — and what a great Labour Party this is!!

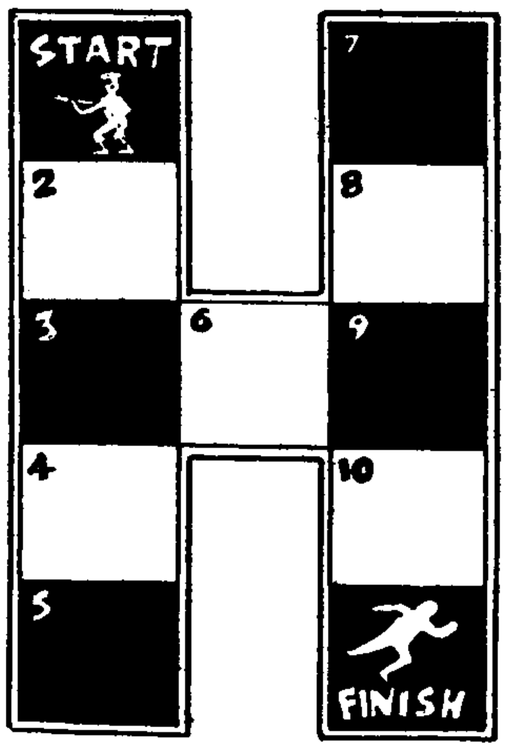
Celeb

LIGGER


SO HOW LONG HAS GARY BEEN IN HOSPITAL, DEBS?
IT'S A WEEK NOW, BARRY.
I READ IN THE PAPERS IT WAS...ER..."NERVOUS EXAUSTION" AGAIN...
THAT'S RIGHT.
AND HOW IS HE?
THE DOCTORS SAY HE'S TOTALLY DRAINED.
OH GOOD.
YEAH, EVERY DROP OF BLOOD HAS BEEN REPLACED. HE'S NEVER FELT FITTER IN HIS LIFE..

THE ULSTER PUZZLER

1. The Amazing Maze!



Can you find your way through the Maze and kill another prisoner? Careful you don't take a wrong turning — and watch out for all the security guards! ***(Difficulty rating: Nil)***

2. Brain Teaser

Why is the Maze called a High Security Prison?
Answer: Sorry. The answer escapes me! (Geddit?)

3. Search Me!

Can you find the hidden item in the block? The prison officers can't!

(That's enough puzzles. Ed)

A	B	C
G	U	N
D	E	F

THOSE TOP CHRISTMAS TV HITS

by Our Media Correspondent
Nicholas Hell

IN THE traditional season of peace and goodwill, what had the nation glued to their sets?

1. Ulstermen Behaving Badly *(Repeat)*

2. Two Feet in the Grave *(Repeat)*

3. They Think the Peace Process Is All Over (It Is Now) *(Repeat)*

4. Shooting People *(Repeat)*

5. Father Dead *(Repeat)*

(That's enough — Ed. No, apparently it isn't — INLA/UVF/etc. Cont until 2094)

KENYAN ELECTION RESULTS IN FULL

Moiville (formerly Nairobi) West: *No Change*
His Imperial Magnificence
The Emperor Daniel arap Moi I
(L'Etat C'est Moi Party):
78,501,612

Mr "Red" Kenya *(People's Anti-Corruption and Dictatorship Party)*: **1**

Mr Kenya loses his life *(surely 'deposit'? Ed.)*

Moibasa (formerly Mombasa): *No Change*
His Imperial Magnificence
The Emperor Daniel arap Moi I
(Apres Moi, C'est Moi Party):
201,643,078

Mr Jack Whitey *(Tea Planters Against Corruption And Dictatorship)*: **0**

Mr Whitey loses his farm *(surely 'life'? Ed.)*

(That's enough democracy, D.a.M.)

Yes! It's Britain's Newest Fanzine

BLAIRZONE

Tone's Very Important Message

DON'T TAKE DRUGS!

That's the message to the kids. Not necessarily *our* kids obviously. But that's the message. Rock 'n' Roll! Or rather Rock 'n' Don'trollyourown!

Blairzone's Joint Fave Hitz

- ***The Magic Dragon Who Cannot Be Named For Legal Reasons (Peter, Paul and Maryjuana)***
- *The Girl In The Sky With Diamonds Who Cannot Be Named For Legal Reasons (The Beatles)*
- ***Jumping Jack Straw (The Rolling Rizlas)***

Thanx!

Thanks but no thanks to all the fans who sent Tone Xmas gifts. Hey — he'd love to accept them, but he doesn't want to compromise the band's integrity. So, sorry to Geoff, Bernie, Fred and everyone else who sent round the booze, the cars and the cheques for millions of pounds. In the words of the late, great, Sir Paul McLennon, "Money can't buy you love". Not any more.

What Tone's Givin' Up For '98

Alcohol
High Protein Foods
Harriet Harman

Tone's Thought For The New Year

"Whoa! I'm going to the Seychelles" by the late, great whoever they were! *(Answers on a postcard to Blairzone. First correct entry wins backstage pass to Tone's big gig at the Institute of Directors!)*

SUPERMODELS

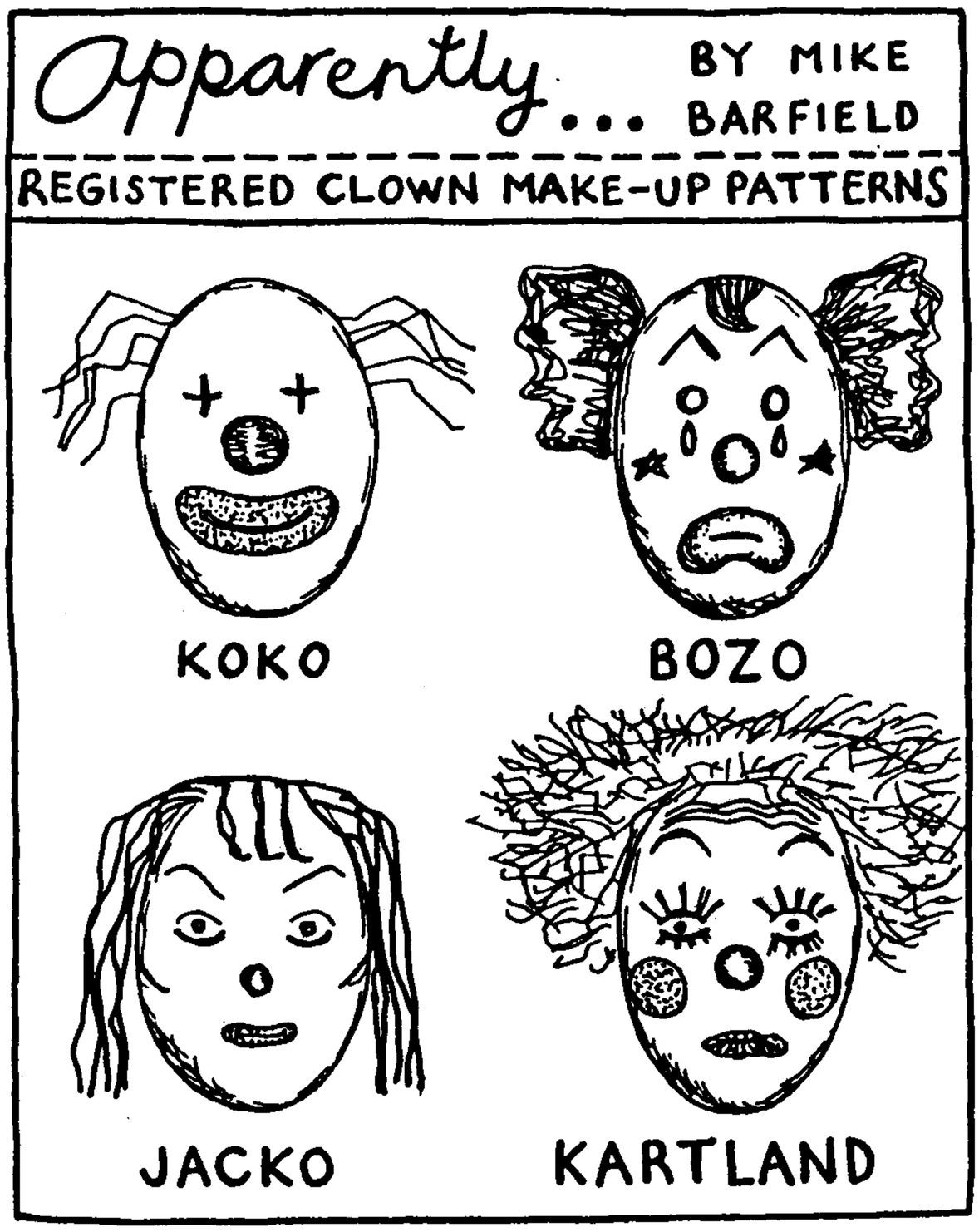
KERBER

PETER, I'M LEAVING YOU FOR SOMEONE ELSE. I'VE HAD ENOUGH!
PETER POWELL MANAGEMENT
STAY ALIVE IN '85
MY GOD ANTHEA, YOU LOOK LIKE YOU REALLY MEAN IT!!!
YES, I'M GOING TO TRY THAT ON T.V. NEXT.

THERE can be no excuse for drinking while under the influence of alcohol. *Hull Daily Mail*

A PRISON nurse had sex with 23 murderers, arsonists and rapists to cure their depression, a court heard. Convicts battled each other after falling for blonde Connie Fuchs, 36. *The Sun*

According to Cousteau, the Duchess, who had never dived before, "mastered the basics" in one afternoon.
He said: "She was a natural, manoeuvring with assurance despite her bulky equipment *Evening Standard*



Sir Ronald Knee, Manager Neasden Football Club, for services to the leisure industry.

Dame Lesley Joseph of *Birds Of A Feather*, for services to culture.

Dame Glenda Lee-Slagg, columnist *Daily Mail*, for services to rubbish.

Sir Bernard Taupin, lyricist by appointment to Lord Elton of John, for funeral services.

New Year's Honours

(cont'd from p.1)

for services to environmental pollution in Gloucestershire; Mr G.C.S.E. Crackdown, leader of Task Force sent in to revitalise the Winnie Mandela Comprehensive School, Neasden; Ms R.R.R. Rote-Learning, Head Teacher of the league-topping Postman Pat Primary School, Nuneaton.

OBD (Order of the Blessed Diana)

Mr R.P. Cellophane, assistant floral displays manager Posies 'n' Rosies, Kensington High Street; Mrs Sharon Tombstone, receptionist at Rigor and Mortis, funeral directors and monumental masons; Mrs Mavis M'buthelezi, senior cleaning supervisor, Westminster Abbey; Mr P.P. Digby-Contraflow, Cone Co-ordinator, M1 motorway; Mr P.D.Q. Fearnley-Whittingstall-Massingberd, flower disposal operative, Kensington and Chelsea refuse division.

K.P. (Nuts)

The Rt. Hon. Sir Robin Butler, KCB, RSPB, BFG, NBG, PPE, QED, www.mandarin.co.uk becomes Grand Commander of the Order of the Queen's Peanut, for services to the civil service.

MBE (Feline)

Humphrey the Cat, for services to rodent disposal in central London.

Life Baronies

Hamlyn, Paul, for services to publishing and not for contributions to New Labour funds. Absolutely not. In no way. Look, we're different from the last lot *(cont'd p.94)*

Harry Enfield's **Bores** Drawn by **Michael Heath 28. Festive cheer**

"... so good to be back at work just about the worst Christmas ever had to go to John's parents absolutely ghastly nothing in common always ask for something from Marks & Sparks so I can get a refund but this year given vile scent John's mother's a nightmare why do that generation always overcook sprouts? John's father constantly pinching my bum utterly sick of Boggle managed to get the Godson a Tinkey-Winkey but couldn't remember how old he was think he must be about thirteen by now didn't even get a bread & butter letter how rude takes after his parents who I now loathe tried to go to Sales yesterday but *so* crowded went to cheer myself up by getting *me* a prezzy at Tiffany's whole shop jampacked with dopey men taking back pen-knives & cufflinks hate all these parties John got pissed on New Year's Eve & called me a bossy slag when I told him it was time to go home not buying him cufflinks again so good to be back at work I could really do with a holiday..."

NO WOMEN IN LIST OF GREAT ARTISTS

by Our Culture Editor **Professor Liza Spartine**

IN A sickening display of phallocentric imperialism, the BBC's Radio Three has deliberately omitted the name of any woman from its list of the Top 100 Artists Of All Time.

Such cliched choices of dead white European males as Beethoven, Shakespeare and Rembrandt feature high on the list.

But where are such towering figures as poet and embroideress Maud Plunkett, novelist Sylvia de Boudoir and the recently rediscovered surrealist painter Annette Badedas?

They have all of course been ruthlessly axed from the selection, in keeping with the BBC's usual policy of sticking to the same tired old names, such as Virginia Woolf, Emily Dickenson, Barbara Hepworth and Dame Lynda Lee-Potter.

As Germaine Greer put it so succinctly when told about the list: "It is outrageous — why am I not on it?" *(cont'd p. 94)*

LEONARDO OUTED SHOCK

by Our Art Staff **Genda Slagg and Lunchtime O'Boys**

THE GAY world was rocked to its foundations yesterday when it was discovered that the most celebrated homosexual artist in history, Leonardo da Vinci, was not after all gay but a secret and sordid heterosexual, who got his kicks from makng love to women.

The disclosures come from a series of hitherto suppressed invoices addressed to the artist from Signora Tutti-Frutti, proprietor of Il Bordello di Milano.

Typical was one bill which read as follows:

Feast Of The Immaculate Conception, Yeare of Our Lorde Fourteen Hundred And Ninety-Two

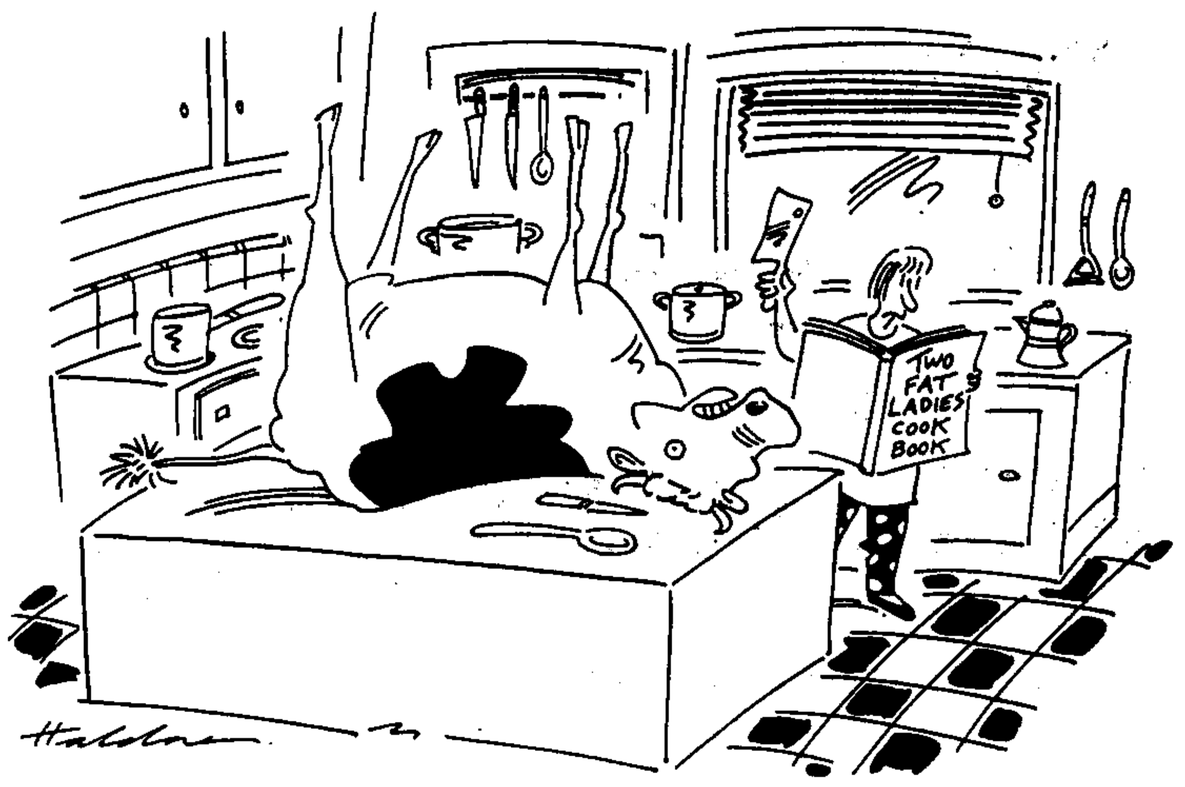
To: Signor da Vinci

For: Services Rendered by

Signorina Mona di
Lisa . . . . . 5 Gold Ducats
(window tax not included)

under which the artist had written, "Paid with thanks. See you Wednesday. Keep smiling!"

Said a spokesman for the Gay and Lesbian Rights pressure group, Outrage: "Clearly this bill is a total forgery, drummed up by the straight Establishment in a desperate bid to reclaim the foremost gay icon of all time for their own, which he is not and never will be."



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Conservatives on Europe

From Twelve Very Important People Indeed

Sir, We are twelve very important and extremely senior members of the Conservative Party. Between us we command all the wisdom known to mankind, and it is our considered opinion that this little squit Hague, who now claims to be the leader of the Conservative Party, is beneath contempt. His stance on the Single European Fish, an issue nearly as important as ourselves, has made the Conservative Party a laughing stock in Brussels. In contrast, Mr Tony Blair is the greatest Conservative Prime Minister we have ever had, and it is a great privilege for us to support him in whatever he does. Vote Labour, you know it makes sense.

Yours, more in anger than in sorrow,
GEOFF HOWE
(The Lord Howe of Mogadon)
MIKE HEZZA
(Sir Michael Heseltine of That Ilk)
KEN CLARKE
(The Rt Hon Mr Kenneth Clarke of all that Jazz)
CHRIS PATTEN
(His Ex-Excellency Sir Christopher Fat Pang)
TEDDY HEATH
(Sir Edward Heath KG PC NBG, Father of the House and author of a number of very important books)
SIR LEON BRITTAN
(Herr Monsieur Leon Bretagne, Vice-President of Europe)
DOUG HURD
(The Lord Hurd of Serbia)
PETE CARRINGTON
(The Lord Carrington of the Falkland Islands)
and several other very important Tories whose names escape us (ie, Mr DAVE CURRY, Mr IAN TAYLOR and Mr JOHN SELWYN GUMBOOT).

Trevor McDonald's Anthology

ONE of my favourite poems, just in, describes the fate of a grandiose building project, erected by a megalomaniac. **Percy Bysshe Shelley** has that story.

OZYMANDELSON

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: "One vast and trunkless plastic dome
Stands in the desert. Near it on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandelson, King of Kings:
Look on my work, ye mighty, and have a good laugh!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level marshes stretch far away.

EVERY PARENT'S WORST NIGHTMARE

by Glenda Lee-Potsmoker OBE

IT IS every parent's worst nightmare.

You never think that it will happen to you.

But then one day you wake up to find that your own daughter has become a journalist on the Daily Mirror.

Nothing can prepare you for the shock that this news will bring.

One minute she is a lovely little girl, playing innocently in the garden with her Barbie dolls.

The next she is hanging about in seedy pubs trying to entrap the Home Secretary's son and shop him to the police as a drug dealer.

DAWN RAID

There are no words to describe the heartache which follows the sickening realisation that your beloved little teenage toddler is now a blonde slapper mixing with some of the most degraded elements in modern society, viz the staff of the Daily Mirror.

"It is every parents' worst nightmare," said Mrs Ludmilla Alford, when she refused to speak to us yesterday at her luxury, 2-bedroom Sunbury home about her daughter Dawn, whom we cannot name for legal reasons.

"We did everything for her," her father might have added, had either of Dawn's parents been prepared to talk to us.

"She had a first-class education, her school reports were always glowing, she had lots of friends and she was popular with staff and students alike.

DOPE

"But now she hangs around with some of the most notorious pushers in London — men like Piers 'The Moron' Moron and Dave 'The Fool Monty' Montgomery.

"These heartless men have made a fortune out of other people's suffering by exploiting the gullible public's addiction to 'shit', as it is called.

"And now," Mr Alford might have concluded, "we have lost our little girl to the twilight world of the Daily Mirror."

Make no mistake. This is the nightmare that every parent dreads.

(You've done this bit. Ed.)

10 TELLTALE SIGNS THAT YOUR DAUGHTER MIGHT BE A DAILY MIRROR REPORTER

1. Looks shifty and withdrawn.
2. Refuses to say what she's up to.
3. Bedroom begins to fill with suspicious "equipment", such as tape-recorders, microphones, etc.
4. Finds it difficult to use long words.
5. Can no longer tell the difference between truth and fiction.
6. Suddenly becomes very rich for no obvious reason.
7. Er...
8. ...that's it.

"Do you mind if we make this a quickie? I'm due with my husband at Relate at six"

LATE NEWS

HOME SECRETARY IS JACK STRAW

AFTER MONTHS of speculation, Jack Straw has been named as the man who is the country's mystery Home Secretary. The shock announcement came about after a time of uncertainty as to who exactly was the man in charge of Home Office affairs.

In a short statement to the press, Mr Straw said: "I'm glad that this business is now out in the open. For months now, this thing has been like a millstone around my neck. Questions such as 'Is he really the Home Secretary?' and 'Surely not him?' have been thrown at me, constantly. But, to be quite honest with you all, the fact that I'm the current Home Secretary appears to be as much a mystery to my colleagues as it is to you."

FA Raps Neasden Floodlight Failure

by **E.I. Erewego**, Our Man In The Director's Box Wearing The New Neasden Strip (£128.99 — Shorts Only) And Drinking Neasden's Own Brand Extra Bitter Lager

THE WORLD of soccer was rocked to its foundations when the FA announced a full-scale enquiry into Neasden's repeated problems with their floodlighting.

For the last 120 games, the floodlights have failed within minutes of the kick-off. The matches have all been abandoned as a consequence, giving Neasden much-needed breathing space in their attempts to climb out of the relegation zone.

Let There Be Lies

But last night soccer supremo Ron Knee denied the light failure was deliberate.

"It is a mystery to me," said the ashen-faced Neasden legend, "why the lights always seem to fail just as the other side look like scoring. I look after the lights myself and I am confident that there is no mechanical fault. It must be human error — such as when I switch them off."

Late News

Neasden fans (Sid & Doris Bonkers) turned out in force (2) to welcome the return of Adolf Klingfilm, "the Obengruppenfuhrer of the Dive into the Box" who has been re-signed to Neasden to solve the club's goal famine.

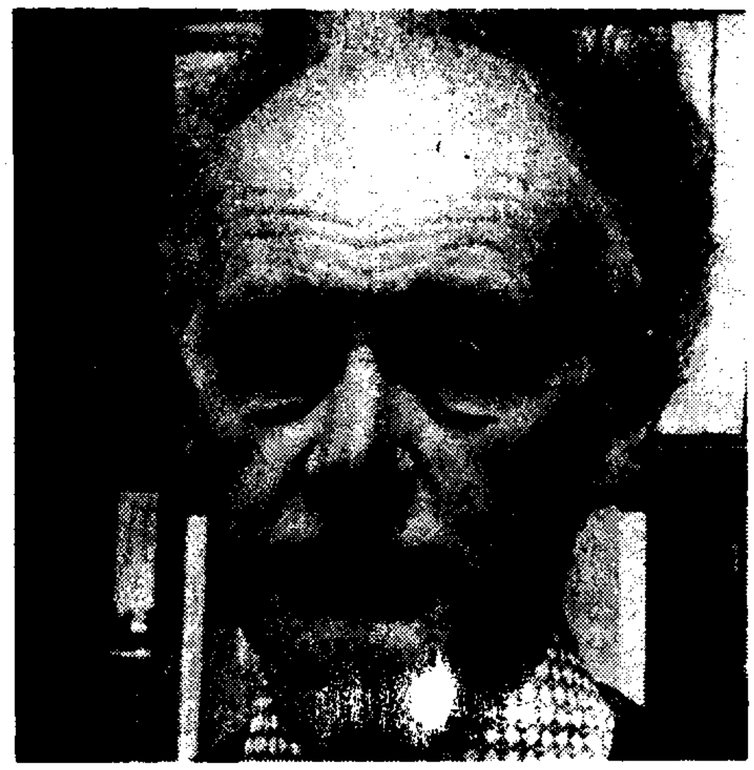
Presenting the German "saviour of the squad" with a traditional Neasden gift (fish and chips from Cod 'n' Spud of Tesco Road), Sid Bonkers told the German: "We beat you in the last war, now it's time for you to beat Dollis Hill."

LATE SCORE

AFC Neasden 0
London Electricity Board 0

(Match abandoned after 2 minutes due to power failure)

DIARY



JAMES LEES-MILNE'S HEAVENLY DIARY

Pass away and go to heaven, much overrated but not without its modicum of somewhat fanciful charm. The golden gates, written up in such hushed tones by the guide-books, prove a tremendous disappointment: garish. garish, *garish*. How one longs for a little English *restraint*. Instead, one must suffer the iniquities of the worst excesses of Italian bravado. Alas, they are largely Romans up here; homos, too, I shouldn't wonder.

Am met at the gates by St Peter. Like many a bearded man, he is rather too full of himself, with an excessively *beery* air about him. One would have thought that by now the greeter at any halfway-decent club would have been persuaded by the powers-that-be to take a razor to his chin.

St Peter welcomes me warmly, but there is far too much touching and — *one shudders to think of it!* — Christian names all round. He is scruffiness personified — not only the hairs sprouting out from every orifice but the lack of any collar or tie. It all reminds me of a cocktail party given by Mrs Foley in Eaton Square in early 1947 to see the Stoke Edith needlework hangings in her drawing-room: quite well done and perfectly civilised, but unkempt, disordered and somehow *louche*.

After the formalities — name, profession, date of death, and so on — one is introduced to this angel and that, none of them particularly forthcoming. They speak in hushed tones of Satan. I seize my cue. "Not one of the *Yorkshire* Satans?" I say, but I draw a blank. It is only too obvious that they have no idea. I remind them that, in the chilly autumn of 1933, I spent a delightfully wicked weekend with Sir Cecil and Lady Cynthia Satan at Damnation Hall, just outside Scarborough. Once again, they contrive to look non-plussed. I suspect them of stuffiness, though I have sufficient manners to refrain from mentioning the feathery protuberances that spring so unashamedly from their backs: *wings indeed!* The sure sign of a homo; quite possibly a wop homo at that.

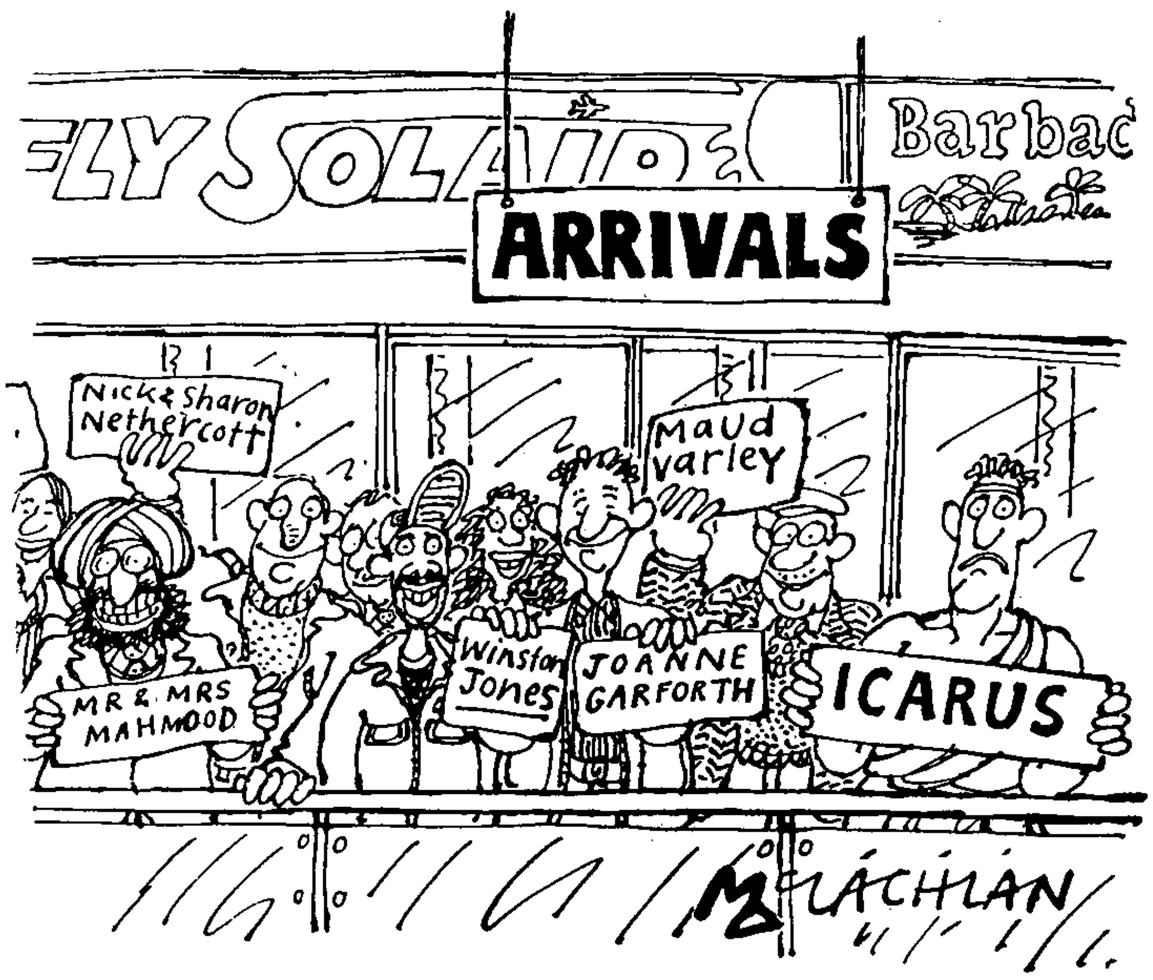
The Angel Gabriel makes an entrance. He smiles in the sweetest, kindliest way, so that I immediately fall head over heels in love with him. He positively *sparkles*.

To a harp concert, quite well done and some pretty passages, but the audience ugly and unwashed. "Who let *them* in?" I ask the Angel Gabriel. It emerges that they are all *bona fide* inhabitants of Paradise. "Come one, come all," explains Gabriel, all goatish and playful. Hardly a suitable policy for admission, I remark. Some sort of means by which one could separate the educated from the smelly would surely be preferable. Paradise is no place for savages, I add, casting a lizard-eye in the direction of an unshod fellow got up in a dirty brown cape, covered in creepy-crawlies and fluttery things. "But that's St Francis of Assisi" interjects Gabriel. I stand corrected.

Off to the clouds, to an intimate *soiree* to meet my fellow new boys. The very sight of them fills me with gloom. Left-wingers abound, ghastly people voicing noisy, modish opinions — all faith this, hope that and charity the other. To my horror, I am introduced to a squat little woman, no taller than an umbrella, her skin coarsely lined and burnt to a crisp, all in all a slightly *chinky look*, her unimpressive and ill-laundered robes dishevelled and riddled with dust. "And who let *you* in? I felt like hissing, just as Gabriel informed me that she was known as Mother Teresa (of *Calcutta*, of all places!). If this is democracy, God help us. "Do you happen to know Debo?" I ask, in a vain attempt to break the ice, "Oh, but you should! She's an absolute *treasure*! Chatsworth is very heaven. Or heaven *sans riff-raff*, of you follow me." M. Teresa looks back at me with a look of gormless incomprehension. Oh why on earth does one *bother*?

At last, I find myself with an *entree* to God the Father.His house may indeed have many mansions, but to my eye every one of them is fearfully *declasse*. I fear it would have been rather more accurate for the scribe in question to have declared that His villa had many chalets. The furniture, too, is not up to much. Nevertheless, I take pains to persevere through the ghastly piped music of the assembled harpists, and attempt to set God at his ease. After much struggle, I make a little headway. "It's awfully noble of you to allow so many of what one might call the Great Unwashed into your Kingdom," I venture, "But have you ever considered the benefits of the long red rope? We found them a tremendous boon at the National Trust for cordoning off the more, shall we say, *private* areas of a Home from those who would have little or no idea of how to behave within their confines. Needless to say, I would be only too pleased to oversee any cordoning-off programme you may care to initiate."

Just as I am getting into my stride, an archangel bangs a gong and announces that dinner is served. At last, I arrive at the front. "Big Mac, Filet-o-Fish or Chicken McNuggets?" asks the presiding Angel. I fear there may have been some awful mistake, and I have been sent to the wrong place.



1997 IN PICTURES

Review of the Year Special

Saddest Image

Dec. 1997: Desperate men at Canary Wharf tragically attempt to fill hundreds of blank pages with dreary reviews of the year.

Literary Review

Lawrence of Academia

D.H. Lawrence: Dying Game 1922-1930
David Ellis
(Cambridge University Press, £25)

ACCORDING to all the received cultural wisdoms, the English are good at literary biography. Senior English novelists (with a few honourable exceptions) are a standing joke on the international circuit; English poetry tends to be descant variations on Hughes and Larkin; but sedulous unravellings of the bygone literary life — somehow this is an area where our boys and girls can really shine, don't you know.

This discovery was made — I don't know — 10 years back. In its wake piles of prizewinning literary biographies lie around the bookshops like so many breezeblocks. In fact, the worst result of the darling notion that here, finally, is a literary form in which the English can excel, is the gigantism that has infected its practitioners.

To take a recent example, Andrew Motion's life of Keats (a man who died in his 20s) weighed in at 600 pages, while the genre's great authenticating monster — Peter Ackroyd's *Dickens* — tipped the scales at nearly twice this length. Ominously enough, Acker's slimmed down paperback was thought markedly superior to its bloated forebear.

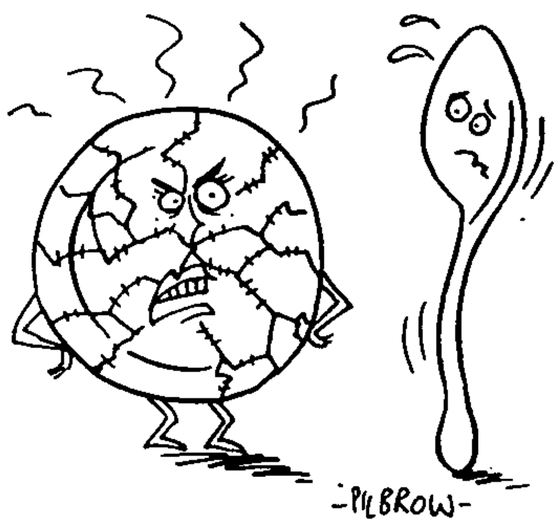
Modern literary biographers don't discriminate, they merely assemble. And of the writers so lavishly recreated for our edification in the past few years, D.H. Lawrence has had the most lavish treatment of all. Setting out to commission the definitive account of his career, the Cambridge University Press had the bright idea of signing up not one, not two, but three different academics to ransack the principal compartments of a not especially long life.

Dying Game 1922-1930 consequently steams resolutely along a channel previously navigated by John Worthern's *The Early Years 1885-1912* and Mark Kinkead-Weekes' *Triumph To Exile 1912-1922*. Nearly 250 of its 780 pages consist of bibliographies and footnotes, and the general effect is to encourage the reader to, well, go and have a cup of tea, read an improving book — anything to get away from this frightful little man and the riot of asperities with which he invested his life.

No one minds biographers being assiduous; no one minds the protracted game of grandmother's footsteps into which this kind of thing habitually dissolves; but it has to be said that 500 pages on the later life of D.H. Lawrence inevitably reduces itself to 500 pages of someone losing his temper. Lawrence's fury — at duplicitous animals on whom he had mistakenly lavished his affection, or at his long-suffering wife Frieda — seems to have been his most settled habit, and no amount of even-handedness can disguise this fundamental fracture. To say that he "beat his wife" would give "a false impression of systematic abuse", Prof Ellis charitably concludes.

Or the exotic scenery, if it comes to that. Though lived out in locations as far apart as Sri Lanka and New Mexico, Lawrence's declining years — from his mid-thirties he was in the grip of tuberculosis — were essentially a single sequence of events endlessly repeated: go somewhere, decide you like it, stay a bit longer, change your mind, take off somewhere else. Thus en route to Ceylon in 1922 he writes "Think I shall love these tropics". As for the bungalow in which they are installed near Kandy, "I shall never leave it". Not long afterwards, though, he can be found railing against "hideous little Buddha temples like decked up pigsties", "rat-hole temples" of "a rat-hole religion". Clearly it was time to leave.

The usual Lawrentian nonsenses about "dark races" and "the heavy German hand of the flesh" (he couldn't bear Frieda's touch when he was ill) are also well to the fore. The classic line on great art produced by artists of deficient humanity is that one should be able to separate life and art, and yet Lawrence's personality smokes out his work so pungently that it's scarcely possible to make the distinction. Somehow admiration for *The Rainbow* is always compromised by the RSPCA bogeyman, a man who not long before he died could be found beating a cat that had eaten one of his goldfish, lurking behind it. Meanwhile, aspiring Lawrentians should forsake this groaning, if well-intentioned doorstopper in favour of Geoff Dyer's recent *Out of Sheer Rage: in the shadow of D.H. Lawrence* (Little Brown, £16.99) which for all the author's trademark laddishness, not to mention his sympathy for Lawrence, has the inestimable merit of being at least 500 pages shorter.



"Great idea going to Greece for our honeymoon"

Brian Sewell hails a taxi

"When I first came to the capital in 1955... Dylan Thomas and, still more, Brendan Behan, set high standards of misbehaviour."

As Loonybins is a devout Catholic, he naturally believes in life after death. Which is just as well — since Dylan Thomas died in New York in November 1953.

Books & Bookmen

■ **"MY complaint is that there is not enough drinking at parties nowadays, especially in London," grumbles Paul "Loonybins" Johnson in the *Daily Mail*.**

☐ ALL is not well at Old Trafford, home of merchandising giants Manchester United, where a backroom row has been raging between manager Alex Ferguson and owner Martin Edwards.

At the centre of the row are two deals being set up by Ferguson. The first concerns the sale of his autobiography which has now been gone to Hodder & Stoughton for a massive £1m.

Edwards is furious that any publisher was considered apart from Andre Deutsch, the club's official publisher. After all, what's the point of having your own publishing arm if the manager doesn't use it?

■ *THAT invaluable little magazine The Week has chosen Jeremy Lewis's biography of Cyril Connolly as one of its "books of the year".*

By an extraordinary coincidence, Jeremy Lewis's daughter Jemima happens to be assistant editor of... The Week.

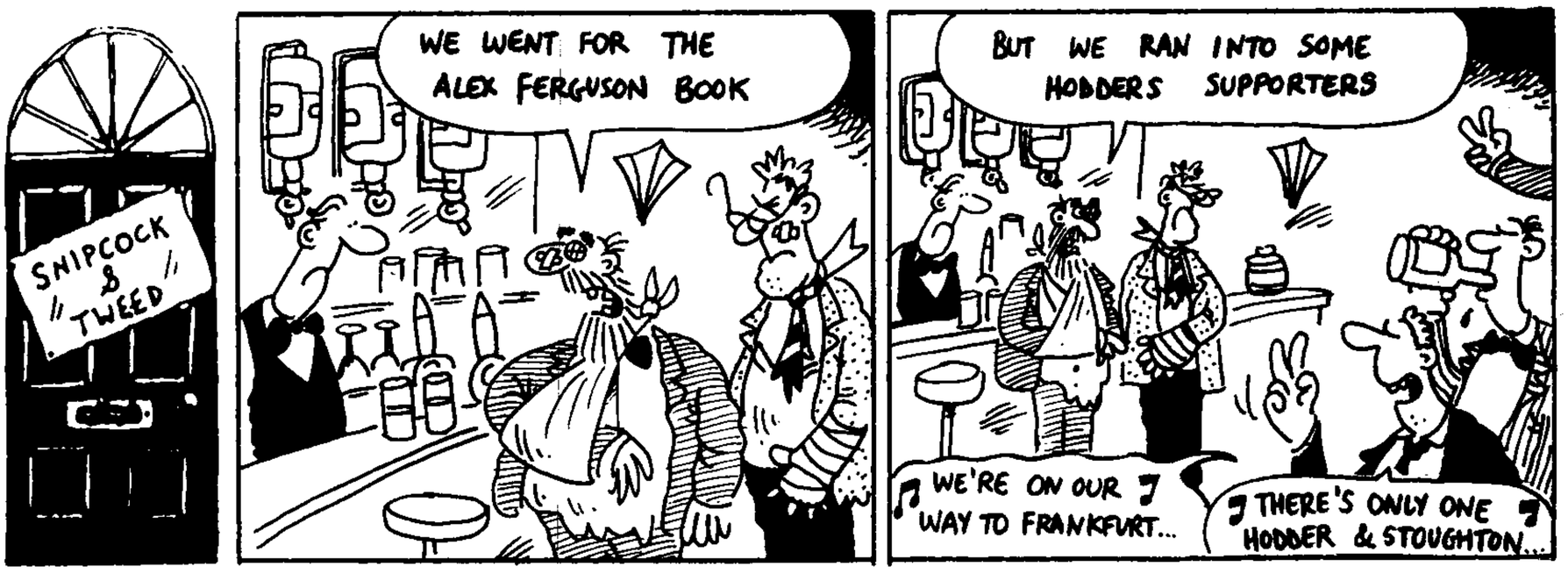
Bookworm

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

FANS of the Brighton Essential Music Festival and the Essential Weekender in London's Finsbury Park were disappointed to hear that the business which ran the events, Essential Music Festivals Ltd, had gone bust.

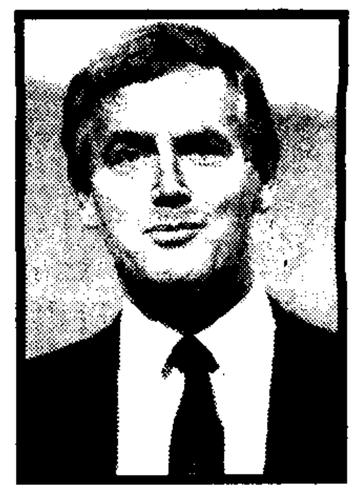
But fear not: the business has already bounced back as Essential Entertainment Ltd under the same boss, one Ish Ali. Ali told the press that "there weren't a massive number of creditors" and that liquidation was a "slight hiccup".

In fact there were more than 70 creditors who between them were owed a quarter of a million pounds. And while one creditor, Sussex-based charity Sightsavers International, whistled for the £21,000 it is owed, Essential Entertainment Ltd was carrying on unhindered by the debts, promoting a massive new year's eve party at Alexandra Palace and another Brighton music festival.


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
WE WENT FOR THE ALEX FERGUSON BOOK
BUT WE RAN INTO SOME HODDERS SUPPORTERS
♫ WE'RE ON OUR WAY TO FRANKFURT...
♫ THERE'S ONLY ONE HODDER & STOUGHTON...

footnotes

SHEIKHS RATTLE ROLLS



MOORE, NOT LESS

BLIND panic swept the board room of Rolls Royce, Britain's most blue-blooded engineering company, on the morning of 12 December when a writ arrived from a Panamanian company demanding millions of pounds in unpaid commissions on arms contracts.

Less than two days later, the details of the writ were blazed all over the *Mail on Sunday* under the ominous headline: ROLLS ROYCE BRACED FOR JET DEALS SCANDAL.

A hasty meeting of executives that Sunday morning concluded that the well-informed *Mail* article could not have been an accident. Their conclusion — that the men behind the writ were prepared to fight for their commissions in public — sent them scurrying into desperate meetings with their lawyers.

THE QUEEN AND I: *Thatcher and Fahd, 1987*

The second paragraph of the writ summed up the scandal which threatened Rolls Royce. "By an agreement made in writing on 31st August 1991 the defendant appointed the plaintiff as its commercial adviser and sole representative in the Territory for the purpose of promoting the defendant's business of selling and supporting its gas turbine engines of all descriptions for military aviation or marine applications"; and that the defendant agreed to pay the plaintiff "a commission" for every gas engine sold.

"The Territory" was the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The engines were for Hawk trainers and Tornado jets sold in the notorious Al Yamamah deals between the British and Saudi governments. The first of these was signed for Britain by Margaret Thatcher and Michael Heseltine in 1985. Ever since, British defence ministers have insisted that "no commissions were paid and no agents or any middlemen were involved" (minister of state for defence, Roger Freeman, in 1994).

Yet here, in a high court writ, it was alleged that Rolls Royce had agreed in writing to pay enormous commissions on the sale of its engines. The writ even set out the terms of the commissions: 8 percent of the price of each gas turbine engine, 5 percent on the price of the spare modules and spare parts. In three letters in 1985 Rolls Royce also agreed commissions of 15 percent on the sale of Adour and RB199 engines. If the price went over the agreed figure, the agreement stated that the payable commission would leap to 100 percent.

KING'S FAVOURITE: *Prince Abdel Aziz*

The writ alleges that since 1991 Rolls Royce sold a large number of the engines to the Saudi armed forces. On the basis of the agreed rate, the commissions on such engines would amount to more than £100m. However, the writ complained in its most embarrassing section, Rolls Royce had so far agreed to pay only £23m. The writ demanded disclosure of the exact number of engines and spare parts sold so that the true commissions due could be calculated. Moreover, the writ concluded, these agreements to pay commissions which the government repeatedly declared were never paid, were "to be subject to, interpreted and construed in accordance with the laws of England". Which is why, no doubt, the writ was issued in the high court in London by City lawyers Davis Arnold Cooper.

Rolls Royce's public reaction to the claim that it had agreed to pay slush money on the Al Yamamah contracts was predictable. "Rolls Royce silent on Saudi talks", was the headline on 20 December in the *Financial Times*. Behind the scenes, however, Rolls was frantically active. On Wednesday 17 December, three days after the story broke, Rolls's lawyers confronted Davis Arnold Cooper, plus barristers, in a torrid secret session in front of a high court master. The language used by both sets of lawyers in the all-day session is reported to have been "abrasive". Rolls's lawyers accused the Panama company of stirring up the controversy in public. The company replied that Rolls had reneged on its agreement. At the end of the day a secret compromise was agreed. The Panama company withdrew the writ and Rolls immediately went into private discussions of payment of commissions at a level far above the £23m already conceded. Thus one of the most famous companies in Britain is now secretly discussing commissions which the British government has always denied had ever been agreed. To complete the picture, the deputy chairman of Rolls Royce is Lord Moore of High Cross, who, as plain John Moore, was for many years Margaret Thatcher's favourite cabinet minister.

Why has the heavy veil which has for so long covered the Al Yamamah commissions scandal been even so fleetingly lifted? The answer lies in the shrinking influence and wealth of the Saudi Royal family. The different factions of commission "skimmers", who until now have been bound together by the limitless flow of oil wealth, are now quarrelling over the spoils.

Who is behind the Panamanian company, Aerospace Engineering Design Corporation, which issued the writ against Rolls Royce and was incorporated in 1984, the year before the Al Yamamah deals were clinched? A company at exactly the same registered address, also represented by Davis Arnold Cooper, is a front for the influential Ibrahim brothers, one of whom is married to the sister of King Fahd's favourite wife. The Ibrahims manage the affairs of the king's favourite son, the partly-lame Prince Abdel Aziz.

Saïd Aburish's comprehensive account, *The Rise, Corruption and Coming Fall of the House of Saud* (1994), tells the story of E-Systems, a company in Texas which was supplying sophisticated radar equipment to the Saudi armed forces. Though the company already had agents, the Ibrahim brothers insisted on being appointed "ground consultants" and being "paid millions of dollars for a fully-staffed office which does not exist". The company, nervous of losing influence with the king, complied. The theme of Saïd Aburish's book is that most of the arms sold in the Al Yamamah deals can never be used by the poorly-trained and incompetent Saudi Arabian armed forces; and that the only purpose of the contracts is to provide commissions for the Saudi rulers.

The balance of power in the Saudi royal family is shifting. King Fahd, in his dotage, spends most of his time watching cartoons on the telly. The power under him is moving away from his favourites, such as the Ibrahims, to other sections of the royal family, noticeably to Prince Sultan, the king's half brother, and his son Prince Bandar, the Saudi ambassador to the United States and owner of a British stately home (plus village) at Glympton Manor. As the balance of power shifts, so the companies which supply the arms dither about the payment of commissions to any one faction. This dithering may explain the steep fall in the huge commission originally agreed by Rolls Royce for their gas engine contracts to the relatively measly £23m.

The Ibrahims' writ and the accompanying publicity is a warning to other Saudi "skimmers" that the Ibrahims will stop at nothing, not even at public hearings in the British high court, to hang on to what they believe is theirs. Rolls Royce is desperate to avoid any further publicity, but it cannot afford the vast sums the Ibrahims are looking for: last year's pre-tax profits on a record order book and turnover were £116m.

Rolls may be forced to fight in open court. If even a few of the letters of agreement mentioned in the latest writ are publicised, the categorical assurances of Tory government ministers for more than a decade will be exposed as lies — and a piece of the most hideous corruption of modern times will finally be laid bare.

Bone of no contention

■ THERE was chaos at Aldershot magistrates' court the other day when Alan Bone faced a charge of speeding at 124mph down the M3.

The first arresting officer, PC Nick Carter, failed to turn up to give evidence. The second arresting officer, PC Kevin Gillespie, didn't turn up either.

The crown prosecutor Fiona McMurray was embarrassed. She had no witnesses. Moreover, she thought she recognised Alan Bone from her work in Hampshire nine years ago. She offered no evidence. The charges were dropped. Mr Bone, who denied speeding, was awarded his legal costs from public (taxpayers') funds.

FACT TO REMEMBER: PC Bone is a police driving instructor based at Surrey police HQ in Guildford.

Forgive and forget

WHEN a 14-year-old boy finally plucked up the courage to report that he was being regularly abused and raped in a council boys' home by the man in charge, the man was finally arrested and later convicted. At once, the other members of the staff at the home started counselling sessions to encourage the children to forgive — not the abuser and rapist, but the boy who had reported him.

This insight into the then prevailing culture in north Wales's children's homes emerged in recent hearings of the Waterhouse tribunal of inquiry at Ewloe. The 14-year-old's horrific ordeal was read to the inquiry last April. His statements described how Stephen Norris, the man in charge of Cartrefle home near Broughton, had sexually assaulted him about four or five times every week for two years. After two years, in spite of the fiercest threats from Norris, the boy finally complained to the deputy head. Norris was carted off the premises and eventually convicted of several offences, including one of indecent assault against the 14-year-old, and sent to prison for seven years.

North Wales Child Abuse Tribunal

Sir Ronald Waterhouse

The boy's story has now been corroborated by another boy's evidence at the tribunal that he had seen the 14-year-old being assaulted by Norris. The chairman, Sir Ronald Waterhouse, was struck by this second boy's description of "counselling sessions" which took place after Norris was removed. The sessions were plainly organised to ensure "forgiveness" of the boy who had dared to tell the truth about his tormentor.

Sir Ronald observed: "I wouldn't like this evidence to pass without expressing my total surprise at the documents disclosed. No doubt some explanation will be given at some stage. Maybe we will just regard it as therapy, but if that is therapy I should like somebody actually trained in therapy to comment on it. The main topic seems to be whether the boy should be forgiven."

Sir Ronald returned to this theme on 27 November during the evidence of John Thomas, the council officer responsible for Cartrefle at the time. Sir Ronald asked him: "Do you know how the children in Cartrefle were dealt with by the social workers when Norris had been removed and how they discussed the question with the boy who made the complaint?"

Thomas replied: "Only second hand through co-ordinating the work. You know, what we did we set up a group of social workers to talk to each individual boy and to meet with them and provide the support."

Q: They didn't talk to each individual boy. They held a meeting.

A: Well, however they did it, you know...

Q: They talked about forgiving the boy.

A: That is inept, isn't it?

Later Mr Thomas was asked by his own barrister, Rachel Langdale, about the "forgiveness therapy sessions" with the five children left after Norris went. She read from a note which described one session as follows: "As a group they were asked how they felt towards the boy — did they think he acted right in reporting Mr Norris's actions or did they feel the boy was wrong? Would anyone like to meet him?"

Rachel Langdale asked Mr Thomas: "At first blush, that sounds as though the group are identifying with Mr Norris and rejecting the boy in that approach. Do you have anything to say about that?"

A: The whole approach seems to me...lacking in some sensitivity.

Waterhouse: Perturbing, isn't it?

A: It is.

Whether it was inept, insensitive or perturbing, the "forgiveness therapy" routine did nothing to obstruct the career of Mr Thomas. He is now director of social services at Torfaen.

VAT'S YOUR LOT

■ **LAST September the *Eye* exposed a blatant tax dodge to avoid VAT on the purchase of equipment by NHS trusts. The dodge, which involved buying and selling through shadow companies in Guernsey, was energetically marketed by Ernst & Young, one of Britain's "big six" accountants.**

Ernst's senior VAT manager, Mr B.J. Withey, peddled his scheme around the trusts, lots of whom snapped it up. The department of health has now reacted sternly. A letter to all trust chief executives from Richard Douglas, deputy director of finance at the National Health Service, says the tax dodges "are unacceptable...there is a net loss to the exchequer."

The letter instructs all NHS bodies participating in the dodge to "take such steps as they can to disengage from such activities at the earliest opportunity and not to renew any such contracts". The trusts, who know where their money comes from, will rush to obey. The extra cost of disengaging from the dodges will be met by the taxpayer. The only gainers are the artful dodgers at Ernst & Young, who will bank their considerable fees from the taxpayer and slip off into the night.

High Principals

EVANS ABOVE

■ **THERE are no plans for a new course in Free Speech, Open Government and Access to Ministers at Llandrillo College, Colwyn Bay, which has 12,000 students and is the second largest further education college in Wales. Nor will any lectures on these subjects be delivered by the college's former principal lecturer in business studies, Mr Guido D'Isidoro.**

Last June Mr D'Isidoro, who was staff development coordinator at the college, wrote a long letter to the parliamentary under secretary at the Welsh office responsible for education, Peter Hain (New Labour and Old Firebrand). The letter outlined a number of the lecturer's serious concerns about the college, many of which arose, he alleged, from what he called "the overwhelming managerial as well as financial power" wielded at the college by the principal, Huw Evans, and the most powerful of the assistant principals, Gill Evans, the principal's wife.

Hain passed the letter to the quango, the Further Education Funding Council, which passed it on to the college governors who set up an inquiry under the college's external auditors, Price Waterhouse. On 25 July Mr D'Isidoro emailed copies of his letter to Peter Hain to all his colleagues at the college. A few hours later, Mr D'Isidoro was suspended from his job for "gross misconduct" — namely "bringing the college into disrepute".

HUGH EVANS

The Price Waterhouse report was completed on 31 July. Peter Hain wrote to Mr D'Isidoro on 14 October: "The report clears the chairman of governors, the principal [Mr Evans] and the assistant principal (finance and resources) [Mrs Evans] of any impropriety in these matters. In these circumstances no further action can be taken by the Welsh office".

Mr D'Isidoro, 50, remained suspended under threat of dismissal. He has now been allowed to retire on health grounds, with no extra money, and has lost his job.

Pompey pays up

■ **MRS Caroline Williams, a partner in Blake Lapthorn, prestigious solicitors of Fareham, Hants, tells the *Eye* that her firm has had "roughly £40,000" in fee income from Portsmouth University since 1991.**

Mrs Williams joined the university's board of governors in 1992. In 1995 she became chairman of the governors and says "no new instructions" have been given by the university to her firm since then.

Hers is not the only connection between Portsmouth University and Blake Lapthorn. The firm's senior partner, David Russell, sits on the board of Heaton Holdings, the holding company for the building empire run by Stuart Waring, Mrs William's predecessor as chairman of the governors at Portsmouth University.

A man with sacks appeal

■ **BY a short head, the much-prized Roger Ward Sacker of the Year award has gone to Richard Atkins, principal of Yeovil College.**

Before Ward stepped down from his post as chief executive of the Association of Colleges pending inquiries into his financial affairs, he congratulated Atkins on the "satisfactory conclusion" of the sacking of 80 lecturers in the summer. Now Atkins has turned his fire on non-teaching staff, starting as usual with the sacking of their union rep. His proudest achievement after busting the union is the new Employees Council, which was deprived of all negotiating rights but could at least submit and publish humble reports. Until now, anyway. A report spelling out abysmally low morale at the college was submitted by the Employees Council on 4 December. It was instantly suppressed.

NEWSFLASH: A JOB FOR WIFE

■ **RAY ANGUS, principal of Aberdeen College, one of the largest further education colleges in Scotland, is pleased to announce the appointment of a new vice-principal. She is Alison Hay, the former personnel director, who is married to... Ray Angus.**

You can write to Paul Foot at 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 0171 287 3183

In the City

THE minister for tax avoidance Geoffrey Robinson will be in the Commons frame again next week after the respite provided by the Christmas closedown and further evidence of "new" Labour's "don't do as I do, do as I say" policy was provided by that enemy of delinquent parents, home secretary Jack Straw.

MPs will have their first chance to quiz him on the Orion Trust, set up for the Guernsey Family Robinson, since further details emerged questioning how this multi-million pound offshore earner came into existence and how independent really are its trustees. Questions which the minister has not so far satisfactorily answered — perhaps because they go to the heart of whether Orion and its £12m-plus assets really are outside the UK tax net.

The main if not only defence for Orion Trust and its discretionary beneficiaries (Robinson, his wife and his sister plus children) against the Inland Revenue is that its settlor was the Belgian Mme Bountiful, Joska Bourgeois, a non-British taxpayer, and that its independent trustees are also non resident.

But as more and more details have been disclosed regarding the background to the trust's acquisition of shares in the Robinson-headed TransTec engineering group and the Robinson-backed Coventry City FC, so tax experts have begun to question both these crucial assertions upon which the treasury minister must rely to avoid tax.

Some even go so far as to suggest that there is possible evidence to suggest that Robinson himself could be a "deemed settlor" of the trust because of his role in the share deals. And if that were so, the trust would be "tainted" and no longer eligible to be non-resident for UK tax purposes because a UK resident/beneficiary (Robinson) indirectly provided assets to the trust. If so, the taxman could assess the TransTec and Coventry City shares for income, capital gains and inheritance tax.

Such an interpretation is strengthened by evidence that the Orion trustees — who appear to be linked to little known, minor league trust managers Richmond Corporate Services — appear to be only too willing to go along with Robinson's legal "suggestions" in buying Transtec and Coventry City shares. This in normal circumstances could raise a Revenue challenge that the management and control of the trust is really onshore (and therefore UK taxable), not offshore. And Robinson's refusal to name the trustees or reveal the terms of the trust or any letter of wishes to the trustees, either from Mme Bourgeois or, more importantly, himself as a discretionary beneficiary, have only served to question the trustees' "independence".

Offshore trust experts point out that Orion Trust was created after Bourgeois' death when Robinson was an executor of her estate. They query whether he had any role in choosing Richmond or the individual trustees, and stress that with the non-resident settlor dead a letter of wishes from the discretionary beneficiary and his family would be all the more important. How otherwise would the trustees know who to look to for advice or "suggestions"? If there is no such letter, they ask, why should the independent trustees accept so many of Robinson's "suggestions" — to buy TransTec and Coventry City and not to make any more tax free distributions to him after the election?

Offshore experts point to several reasons the Revenue could consider Robinson to be a "deemed settlor" of Orion. Central to this opinion is that Robinson has admitted introducing and facilitating investment opportunities which have enhanced Orion's assets. This, say experts, could make the trust eligible for UK tax.

Robinson enabled Orion to acquire the 9.8m shares in TransTec available to him under the 1996 rights issue. The sale of the "rights" to Stenbell, a Robinson company, which then took up the shares and sold them on to the trust, is seen as only being explicable as a move necessary to prevent Robinson being "deemed" by the Revenue to be a settlor of the shares. Such a transparent arrangement — though supposedly at "arm's length" — could be open to challenge if done by ordinary would-be non-taxpayers. Indeed, it is exactly the type of tax-driven device likely to be banned by Robinson's friend and fan, chancellor Gordon Brown, in his proposed general anti-avoidance law.

Stenbell raised £10.1m to buy the TransTec shares with help from Orion, either by way of a loan or guarantee with the shares as added security. How Orion provided that money is unknown — it seems unlikely but not impossible that the trust had £10m cash. More likely is that Credit Suisse provided the money. Robinson says he does not know the trust's other assets! But any bank would have been unlikely to make such a loan without a guarantee, and that is most unlikely to be given by trustees who are not paid to assume £10m liabilities. Did Robinson give any such guarantee? If he did, that could also make him a "deemed settlor" and the shares subject to UK tax.

The role of any guarantee is made all the more relevant by the collapse in the TransTec share price since the Robinson row erupted in November. The shares are now around 80p against the 110p paid by Orion in September 1996. This represents a paper loss to date of almost £3m, which could trigger margin calls for further security.

Robinson has admitted "suggesting" that Orion invest in Coventry City. Furthermore, it would appear that at least in the second purchase a year ago he decided that the trust rather than himself would be the purchaser of shares sold within months for a £184,000 profit. That, say tax experts, could make Robinson a settlor and the profit taxable at 40 percent — up to £74,000.

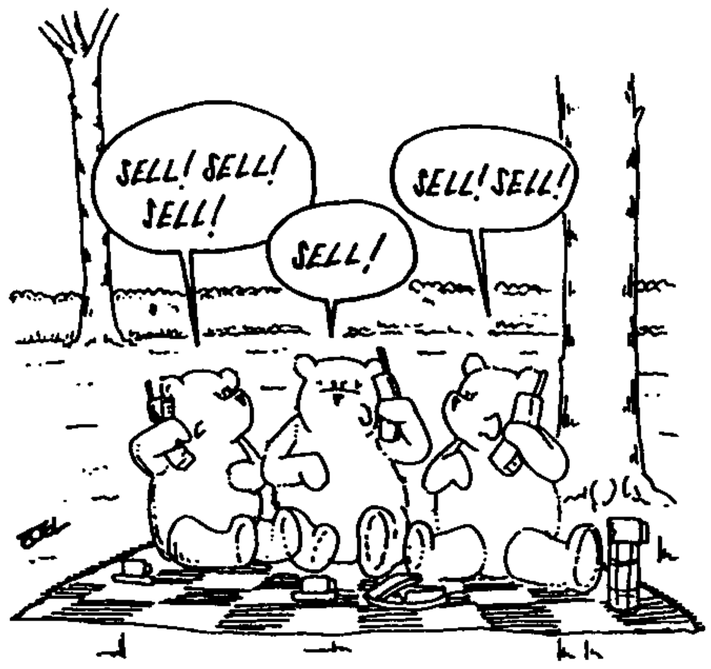
Then there is the still unexplained journey taken by the 2.95m TransTec shares transferred into the trust after the election. Robinson has declined to say where these shares were before they reached the trust. He implies they belonged to Mme Bourgeois, who had helped finance TransTec early on. The shares were worth some £3m at the time of the transfer. But it they were part of her estate, as executor he would have had control of the shares which he maintains were always meant to go into the trust. Tax experts say that had he transferred the shares to the trust as an executor, he could again be deemed a settlor.

Was that why Robinson ceased to be an executor just before the shares were transferred? Were the shares gifted to him or his family or to an offshore trust? If they were gifted to Robinson onshore where they would have been taxable, why did they go to the trust offshore where they were non-taxable?

Robinson has answered none of these questions; nor has he disclosed the terms of the Bourgeois settlement in his favour or said why the shares had not been transferred until 1997 when Mme Bourgeois died in 1994.

The arcane tax technicalities surrounding the Orion Trust have served Robinson well in handicapping both parliamentary debate and public understanding. But what MPs should focus on are two very simple questions:

Why should the treasury minister who wishes to curb the tax avoidance of others be able to benefit from arrangements which tax experts consider may be sufficiently flawed to make lesser beings liable to UK tax? And how is it possible for the Inland Revenue to investigate the non-resident status of the Orion Trust and the independence of its trustees when the beneficiaries include a treasury minister?



Teddy Bears Panic

NEXT week will see the opening of two major challenges to the Department of Timidity & Inaction's powers to disqualify company directors.

On 14 January the DTI is set to begin its bid to disqualify former England coach Terry Venables following its investigations into his role at Tottenham Hotspur, Edennote, Scribes West and other companies. Venables has been successful in obtaining several delays, but now it's showtime.

The next day the DTI is due to take up arms against former British & Commonwealth chief executive John Gunn and several former co-directors. B&C collapsed in 1990. The proceedings have been in progress since 1994 and are set to run and run,.

Look for a deal.

THE GNOME Institute for Greed Management has made its second annual awards celebrating excellence in white collar crime. The award winners are:

Crook of the Year: Mohamed Fayed for achievements in safe deposit box opening, telephone tapping, sexual harassment, racial discrimination — but most of all economy with the truth.

Newcomer of the Year: Andrew Regan for obtaining confidential documents from the Co-Operative Wholesale Society the old fashioned way, stealing them.

Comeback of the Year: Lord Moynek, aka Jonathan Guinness, who returned from justified obscurity to buy control of Swedish company Trustor with its own money and facilitate the theft of £50m.

Escaper of the Year: Roger Levitt, by proving that no crook, no matter how guilty (as he was of acting as a director while disqualified of International Boxing Corporation) need lose sleep when the DTI is on the case.

'Slicker'

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How I Improved My Memory In One Evening

The Amazing Experience of Robert Heap

"Of *course* I place you! You're Bob Jones of Birmingham."

"John Bagshaw, the supermarket man, introduced me to you at the dinner of the Bowls Club three years ago in October."

The assurance of this speaker — in the crowded corridor of the Hotel Piccadilly compelled me to look at him.

"He is Dr. Bruno Furst, the most famous memory expert in the world," said my friend Bob Clark.

As we went into the banquet room the toast-master was introducing guests to Dr. Furst. I got in line and Dr. Furst asked me, "What are your initials Mr. Heap, your occupation and telephone number?" Why he asked this, I learned later, when he picked out from the crowd the sixty men he had met two hours before and called each by name without a mistake. What's more, he named each man's occupation and telephone number.

Amazingly he also called back long lists of numbers, playing cards, prices, newspaper articles and anything else the guests gave him in rapid order.

* * *

When I met Dr. Furst he rather bowled me over by saying:

"There is nothing miraculous about my remembering anything I want to remember, whether it be names, faces, figures, facts, or something I have read.

"You can do this as easily as I do. So can anyone with an average mind.

"My own memory," continued Bruno Furst, "was originally very faulty. On meeting a man I would forget his name in thirty seconds, while now there are probably over ten thousand men and women in the world, whose names I can recall instantly on meeting them."

"That is alright for you, Dr. Furst," I interrupted, "you have given years to it. But how about me?"

"Mr. Heap", he replied, "I can teach you the secret of a good memory in one evening. I have done it with thousands of pupils. In the first of twelve simple lessons which I have prepared for home study, I show you the basic principle of my whole system. I will prove it to you.

He didn't have to. His Course did; I got it the next day.

When I tackled the first lesson, I was surprised to find I had learned — in about one hour — how to remember a list of one hundred words so that I could call them off forward and back without a single mistake.

That lesson *stuck*. So did the other eleven. Indeed, I was so impressed I introduced Dr. Furst's Course to this country.

Read this letter from Mr. J. W. Sullivan of London SW2:

"Since I started your Course my memory has improved out of all recognition."

Mr. Sullivan didn't exaggerate.

Dr Bruno Furst's Course is fantastic! I can rely on my memory now. I can recall the name of anyone I have met before — and I keep getting better. I can remember any figures I wish. Telephone numbers come to mind instantly. What's more my concentration has improved.

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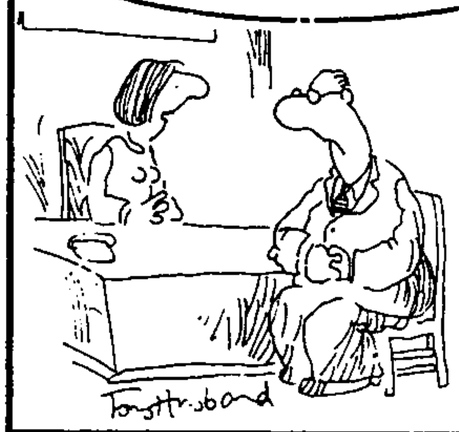

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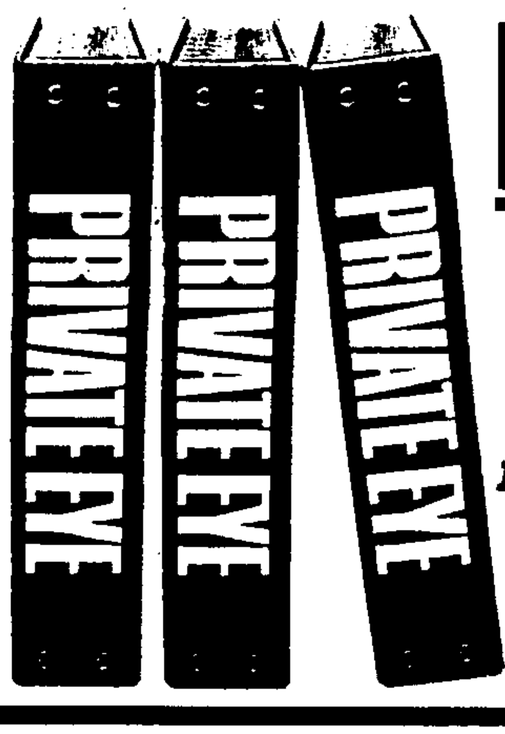

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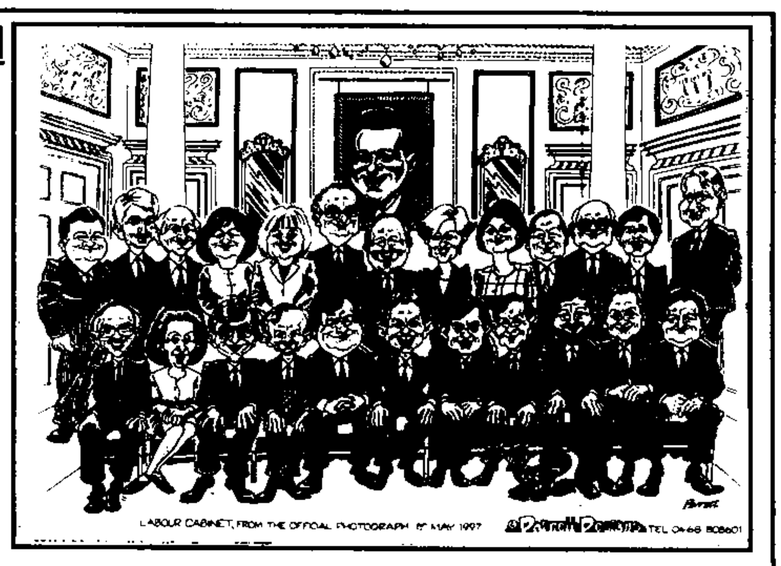

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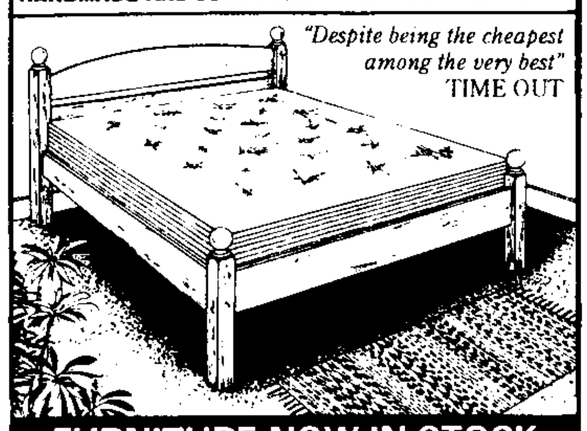

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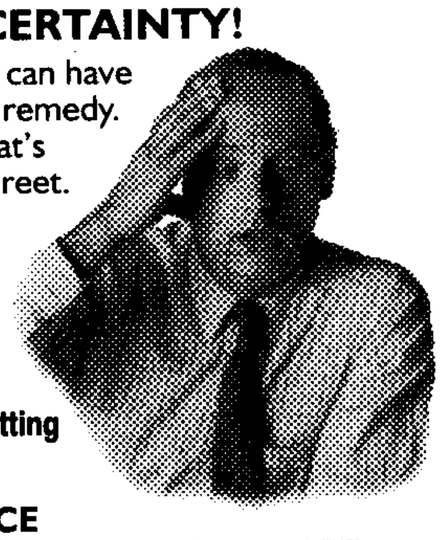

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